

In House
with you

Emotional intelligence 101 for in-house lawyers

The landscape

Studies show lawyers score above average in intelligence but below average in emotional intelligence.¹

We neglect our emotional intelligence at our peril. Emotional intelligence helps you inform, persuade, influence, negotiate and collaborate more effectively. These skills are vital when you're in-house because they give you the tools to build healthy, productive relationships across the business. They also help you to be a better leader and manager: employees reporting to highly emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to perform higher and have greater job satisfaction.²

So how can you further develop your emotional intelligence?

Top tips from our team

Emotional intelligence as a muscle

Emotional intelligence requires regular reflection on what has gone well and what hasn't gone so well. It isn't something you learn overnight, but if you're resistant to identifying and developing your level of emotional intelligence it has the potential to have a negative impact on your working relationships.



Helicopter versus weeds

As a lawyer, the instinct is to be 'in the weeds', exploring every detail and putting your point of view across.³ However, from a leadership perspective, taking a 'helicopter' perspective by saying less and listening more has huge value. You notice so much more when you're watching rather than participating.

¹ American Bar Association: How emotional intelligence makes you a better lawyer

² Journal of World Business: A cross-cultural meta-analysis of how leader emotional intelligence influences subordinate task performance and organizational citizenship behavior

³ ABA Journal: The Lawyer Personality

Leading versus managing

When you lead, you trust people and empower them to harness their own strengths. When you manage, you give much more direction and require that certain things are done in a certain way. There is a time and a place for both approaches – the key is to know which style is right in which situation.



Food for thought



Emotional intelligence isn't just about understanding other people, it's also about understanding yourself. When you understand yourself, you're equipped to be more resilient in your career, no matter what it throws at you.

How often do you reflect on who you are? What are your emotional strengths? What are your emotional weaknesses? How can you harness your strengths and mitigate your weaknesses?

A case in point

One high achiever's approach to supervision can appear too stern because of their intolerance of what they perceive to be other people's incompetence. Recognising and managing this trait is vital for the health of the overall team.

Another individual may lose motivation without regular external validation. A quiet word of appreciation every so often provides an ego boost that helps check these tendencies.

Contributors to this piece



Stephanie Hallett
Head of Eagle HR
M: 07384 468 530
E: shallett@hcrlaw.com



Rachel Roberts
Partner, Deputy Head of
Employment and Immigration
M: 07725 242 980
E: rroberts@hcrlaw.com



Michael Stokes
Partner, Head of Employment
and Immigration
M: 07807 747 455
E: mstokes@hcrlaw.com



Andrea Thomas
Partner, Head of
Employment, Wales
M: 07725 240 233
E: athomas@hcrlaw.com

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