



## Emotional intelligence: Career insurance for the new year

By Tom Pierce

When you were starting your career, do you remember how simplistic the advice you got from older people seemed? Then, when you got older, you realized the wisdom of their words.

I met the late Sam Cook Digges shortly after he was named president of CBS Radio. I was considering an advertising sales position with CBS; I asked Digges whether this would be the right job to launch my career in broadcast management. He responded with the enigmatic smile of someone who has been there and done that. Then he said patiently, “Do your job, and your career will take care of itself.”

We’ll revisit that career advice in a moment, but first we need to fast forward three decades. Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, in his 1999 *Harvard Business Review* article “Hiring Without Firing,” listed 10 deadly traps that explain why the wrong person gets hired. One of those traps was “ignoring emotional intelligence.”

The author cited a study of 500 managers on three continents. Egon Zehnder International found that unsuccessful managers, each with exceptional IQs and experience, had emotional intelligence deficiencies. Researcher Daniel Goleman, whose 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence* accelerated awareness of the concept, discovered that emotional intelligence skills account for 90 percent of the success of senior leaders.

These studies added new metrics to the old mantra of executive recruiters, cited by Fernández-Aráoz: “Hired on experience and fired on personality.”

You can’t change your IQ, but you can improve your EQ. Consider this bit of logic:

- If you have high emotional intelligence, you are more likely to succeed in your association job.
- If you succeed in your job, your association career will take care of itself.
- Therefore, if you have high emotional intelligence, you are more likely to succeed throughout your career.

So how do you increase your EQ?

Goleman organizes emotional intelligence into four domains:

- Self-awareness and self-management refer to personal competence.
- Social awareness and relationship management refer to competence with other people.

The best way to begin improving your emotional intelligence is to work with a coach qualified to guide you through an EQ assessment. After you discover which EQ areas need strengthening, your coach will help you develop an EQ action plan. Here’s

one example of how a rising skill can apply to all domains:

1. Practice active listening to increase your empathy.
2. As your empathy develops, your social awareness will improve.
3. As your social awareness develops, your overall emotional intelligence will improve.

Easy as 1-2-3? Not quite. Whenever you try to improve an EQ skill, rewiring your brain usually requires three to six months of practice, including the inevitable setbacks.

What’s the payoff?

- You’ll perform better in your current job.
- You’ll interview better for your next job.
- You’ll improve your relationships, not just within your association, but in every area of your life.

That’s a terrific ROI, so keep your New Year’s resolution to work on your EQ. Think of it as career insurance.

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