

Take your emotional intelligence to the next level

ASAE CareerHQ.org recently presented “Emotional Intelligence—The Best Career Insurance That Money Can’t Buy,” a networking webinar conducted by executive coach Tom Pierce, MBA. Below are two questions Pierce answered during the session. To view the entire webinar and find other career resources, visit www.careerhq.org.

Do you have any recommendations or tips for using emotional intelligence when dealing with email or other non-face-to-face communication?

Tom Pierce: That’s a terrific question. In the old days, there was a rule in big

companies that if you were angry, you should type a memo, put it in your desk drawer, read it the next day, throw it out, and go talk to the person. As we all know, we’ve all been victimized, or have victimized others, with emails. No email should ever be sent when you’re emotional. So in your own case, I think you should consider using the “draft” function, or the “print it out and read it” function, or the “let someone else look at it” function. The memo theory is the same; sleep on it overnight. It is just too easy to press that “send” button and say “Aha!”

But I think there is something beyond email etiquette, isn’t there? Where it isn’t just about the polite way to use emails, but when an email has been used as a weapon. It’s just too easy to sit in the office and bang that email out. I think the person has to be coached that they should do lunch with the other person or walk down the hall seven steps and sit down and say, “I have an issue that I need to discuss with you.”

We need to understand that email is very efficient for getting data out, for example, to all of you at the same time about how to log in to this webinar. But emails should never be used as weapons and should never be sent when you have high emotion. And if someone does that

on a regular basis, he or she really needs to be counseled because, as we know, emails last forever. They can’t be withdrawn easily yet. And the hurt can last longer than if you had initiated a face-to-face conversation.

What is a good way to accurately interpret the emotions or thoughts of others?

Let’s go back to the detective analogy we talked about earlier. The more evidence the merrier; the police cannot make a case on one little shred of evidence. I recommend that, if you sense that this emotion is a problem, look at other ways the person reacts. Maybe the person burned the toast that morning and the car didn’t start, and by the time your colleague gets to you, he or she is on a roll.

If the behavior is something new, why don’t you let it go? But if you are seeing evidence in other quadrants of your workplace about the same kind of behavior, then it’s time to have the right person—whether it’s an HR professional, or you, or someone you talk to, or someone who will be the best, most gentle, sensitive soul—say that this behavior is not getting us or our association where we need to go. Evidence, evidence, evidence. Be sure you’re right, and go ahead.

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