

Coaching Tip #729

Exceptional Leaders -

Embrace High Emotional Intelligence (EI) Levels in Hospitality Industry



Exceptional leaders who possess high levels of EI are able to communicate vision, enthusiasm, manage stress and make decisions effectively. They are able to minimize unnecessary organizational noise while empathizing with internal and external customers. They can also accurately assess their own emotions in an effort to choose the best strategies to both maximize results and satisfy the parties involved.

The word “service” is a bi-product commonly use in hospitality workers and managers. Employees work in departments with names like “Guest Services” or “Catering Services.” Restaurant wait staff are known as “servers.” They are trained to be “service oriented” and “be of service” and provide excellent “customer service.” However, the quality of service is subjective.

Studies have shown a strong relationship between the Overall EI level of service providers and customer satisfaction and positive impact to the bottom line.

One of the problems the Quick Service Restaurant industry faces is that the staff are often minimum wage earners who are unable to afford the service that they are providing. For the employees to be able to provide the necessary level of service, they too must feel appreciated and supported. One of the primary duties of hospitality managers is to lead in such a way that both their internal and external customers can find satisfaction. High scored EI managers in the QSR industry possess the skill sets to be aware of their emotions, manage their emotions, and influence their stakeholders effectively.



Some strategies to Increase EI in Customer Service Staff

- *High EI tends to reduce turnover* - Daniel Goleman (1995) verified that EI increases with age and maturity. So those who choose not to change careers after a short time already possess high levels. “Older” staff are steadier, more experienced and able to cope with stress more effectively. Their commitment levels are stronger, thus reducing quick turnover.
- *EI leads to higher satisfaction* - Since all areas of hospitality require managers to interact with internal as well as external customers, a study in 2004 found high EI scored managers lead to higher customer satisfaction as well as team satisfaction. Business and people performance had a positive correlation to leaders with high EI.
- *EI training should be implemented at the line level* - EI skills are teachable, replacement of current employees or managers is not the only answer nor cost effective. EI training could aid in higher intrinsic satisfaction and create a longer tenure for staff. By enhancing the satisfaction of employees who may then choose to stay with the company longer, reduction of the high cost of turnover would be an additional bonus to the company.