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Emotional Intelligence No.1 Leadership Skill For 2024, Says Research

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Qualities associated with emotional intelligence are in the WEF's top 10 list of skills for the next ...

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If there's one thing that all of the most effective leaders and high-performing professionals have in common, and that anyone moving into 2024 needs to prioritize on their professional development radar, it's possessing high levels of EQ (emotional intelligence). According to the World Economic Forum's [Future of Jobs 2023 report](#), qualities associated with emotional intelligence such as resilience, curiosity, lifelong learning, motivation, and self-awareness, are highly prized by businesses and will

continue to be so for the next few years. This is "evidence that businesses emphasize the importance of resilient and reflective workers embracing a culture of lifelong learning as the lifecycle of their skills decreases," states the report, which lists these skills in its top 10.

In fact, a Lee Hecht Harrison Penna [survey](#) conducted in 2019 revealed that out of 500 people managers, an estimated 75% use emotional intelligence levels as a criteria for considering a team member for a promotion or salary increase.

Since this skill is so critical to you as a leader if you wish to accelerate and progress your career, the important question is, What is emotional intelligence and how can I build EQ skills?

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Popularized by Dr. Daniel Goleman in the mid-to-late 1990s, emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and effectively manage your emotions and that of others. EQ is prized by employers because it demonstrates a susceptibility to learn and grow, also known as self-awareness, which shows that you have a positive attitude and will more readily take on feedback to improve your performance.

And of course, higher performance equals higher pay and being entrusted with more responsibilities. Additionally, emotional intelligence enables you to thrive in work relationships, understand the needs of stakeholders, and build and salvage negatively impacted relations with business partners, team members, and clients. In turn, this strengthens the company's reputation and market reach—and your own.

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How Can I Build Emotional Intelligence?

To build emotional intelligence skills, there are a few areas of focus you need to be aware of:

1. Lifelong Learning

A key aspect of leadership and career progression is being willing to embrace a lifestyle of continuous learning, also known as the growth mindset. Regularly seek new opportunities to add to your existing skill set and knowledge base; don't be content with knowing just enough. Proactively engage with your employer and ask for learning opportunities, which can be in the form of peer mentorship, them sponsoring or recommending a course or training event, or mentorship from senior leaders. Never stop expanding your expertise and remember that all constructive feedback is useful—regardless of the source.



It should be every leader's goal to be a lifelong learner GETTY

2. Resilience

Resilience is another essential skill that is a trait of emotional intelligence. Being resilient means that you open yourself up to innovation and possibilities in your life and work, and are comfortable **taking risks and making failures** because you see them as opportunities to grow. To build resilience, dust yourself off from your mistakes ask yourself questions such as, What if I tried this? What else could be done? What can I learn from my mistake? How can I improve?

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3. Self-Awareness

When you have high EQ levels, you will be able to recognize and control your emotions and how you react to upsetting situations that may take place at work. Your emotions will be under more control and your wellbeing will improve. To develop self-awareness, learn stress management techniques, note down your feelings and reactions at work towards the end of a work day or long work week, and practice mindfulness exercises.

4. Empathy

Empathy is especially critical for leaders in 2024, as there is becoming more of an increased focus on leadership styles that embrace wellbeing and work-life balance. This is mostly due to wellbeing crises, the cost of living and inflation, and major changes such as those imposed by layoffs and hybrid working.

Multi-generational working and collaboration with global, multi-ethnic teams as part of DEI initiatives imposes the need for current and aspiring leaders to be adaptive and considerate of each generation, leveraging the strengths and accommodating the needs of all so far as possible.

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To build empathy, practice active listening, demonstrate that you genuinely care, put yourself in the other's shoes, and offer support wherever possible.

5. Team Skills

Finally, you need a solid set of social and teamwork skills. As mentioned earlier, emotional intelligence is not just about your own emotions, but also being able to relate to others' emotions and actively listen. Focus on acquiring rapport-building skills, [improving your communication skills at work](#), and mastering conflict resolution. This will help you excel in your current role and as you progress into leadership and manage teams and stakeholders.



Empathy is a critical leadership skill demanded by 2024's global workforce GETTY

Ultimately, making your EQ a top priority for your career goals for 2024 will have a strong bearing on your long-term professional success. Cultivate and improve this skill set through self-awareness, lifelong

learning, resilience, and building solid, healthy relationships with your team.

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