

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORK OF A CONTEMPORARY MANAGER

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**Purpose:** Analysis and evaluation of the importance of emotional intelligence with special attention to its role in the professional work of a modern manager.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study is a review and attempts to answer the question: what competencies of managers in Polish companies are desired today and do they also include those in the area of emotional intelligence? The author's thesis is that competences in the area of emotional intelligence are key competences of contemporary managers managing in conditions of uncertainty.

**Findings:** The analysis of the literature on the subject and the results of the report research indicate that the Decalogue of desirable competencies of modern managers is definitely changing. It is indisputable that substantive preparation, including hard competencies, intelligence and creativity, are essential for managerial positions, but soft skills such as empathy, composure, forbearance or the ability to cooperate in an enterprise, classified as emotional intelligence, are gaining key importance. Taking into account the uncertainty of events in the external environment of Polish enterprises, managers who possess highly developed emotional competences, such as self-awareness, stable self-esteem or composure, are now needed. The above is a prerequisite for meeting the challenges posed to managers by the contemporary business environment.

**Research limitations/implications:** The paper points out the competences of managers, particularly desirable in the current business environment, characterised by uncertainty. The paper highlights key competencies for times of crisis and a set of leader characteristics, with particular emphasis on the role of competencies in the area of emotional intelligence.

**Practical implications:** the author cites the results of a study of managers that demonstrates the need to take measures to offset deficits in emotional intelligence. As a basis for this, she points to the need to understand emotional processes in other people, the mechanisms of self-motivation, and the impact and influence of emotions on employees. Developing emotional intelligence is a process that requires conscious effort and practice. A manager wishing to broaden his or her skills in this area can benefit from a variety of strategies, exercises and activities. Trainings, workshops, team coaching or support groups that build community, enable people to learn from each other and share experiences will be helpful.

**Originality/value:** New and difficult challenges make it necessary to strengthen the mental resilience of managers and their knowledge of themselves and their emotions as necessary to analyse their own needs and strengthen adaptability. This means working on managing emotions and coping with stress. By developing competences in the area of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, a stable sense of self-esteem or self-control, it is possible to meet the challenges managers face in today's business environment.

**Keywords:** emotional intelligence, manager, professional work.

**Category of the paper:** The paper is a review.

## 1. Introduction

Successful managerial performance is not only related to factual knowledge, experience or hard skills. Nowadays, so-called soft skills, including understanding one's emotions, awareness of one's own capabilities, empathy and relationship management, are increasingly important in achieving success in companies. This set of skills is part of emotional intelligence.

D. Goleman takes the view that the professional success of a manager is influenced as much as 80% by emotional intelligence and only 20% by general intelligence. Studies and observations of the behaviour of business people show that only about 40-45% of professional success is due to knowledge and good subject matter preparation and general intelligence. In the remaining cases, it is work on oneself and diligence that are decisive, as well as a warm, calm character, i.e. personality, and in it the group of traits called emotional intelligence turned out to be the most important. Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that emotional intelligence plays a key role in creating professional success.

A manager's emotional intelligence is a key element that influences employees' sense of satisfaction within a company. It is not only a set of skills, but also the ability to consciously use emotions in the management process, which has an impact on the work atmosphere, the commitment of the team and the overall wellbeing of employees. A manager with developed emotional intelligence is able to identify and control his or her feelings, which influences a calm and balanced approach to problems. Such a manager's attitude creates an atmosphere of safety in the team, which in turn contributes to lowering stress levels and improving employee motivation.

The aim of this paper is to present the importance of emotional intelligence with particular reference to its role in the professional work of a contemporary manager. The author's thesis is that competences in the area of emotional intelligence are key competences of contemporary managers, managing in conditions of uncertainty.

## 2. The concept and essence of emotional intelligence

The literature on the subject presents many definitions of emotional intelligence, but the most popular one is by D. Goleman, who refers emotional intelligence to a person's ability to recognise his or her own feelings and the feelings of others, the ability to motivate

and manage emotions, both his or her own and those of people with whom we have some kind of relationship.

Over the years, emotional intelligence has become the object of research by many authors, resulting in a number of definitions of the term in the literature. An explanation of the meaning according to selected authors is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
*Selected definitions of emotional intelligence*

Author(s)	Title of publication	The concept of emotional intelligence
P. Salovey, D.J. Sluyter	<i>Rozwój emocjonalny a inteligencja emocjonalna: problemy edukacyjne.</i>	The ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions appropriately, the ability to access feelings, the ability to generate them at times when they can support thinking, the ability to understand emotions and understand emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions so as to support emotional and intellectual development. The ability to keep track of others' as well as one's own feelings and emotions, to distinguish between them and to use this kind of information in guiding one's own thinking and actions.
A. Szczepaniak, K. Jabłkowska	<i>Historia rozwoju pojęcia inteligencji emocjonalnej.</i>	A range of non-intellectual capacities, competencies and skills that enable an individual to cope effectively with the demands and pressures of the surrounding environment.
E. Nęcka	<i>Inteligencja. Geneza, Struktura, Funkcje.</i>	A group of abilities to cognitively process information related to emotions or to problems arising from the fact that emotions exist.
C. Ott	<i>What is Emotional Intelligence?</i>	The ability to recognise one's own feelings and management of them, as well as to identify and respond effectively to other people's feelings.

Source: Own work based on: Salovey, Sluyter, 1999, p. 34; Szczepaniak, Jabłkowska, 2007, p. 230; Nęcka, 2005, p.101; Ott. <https://ohio4h.org/sites/...>, 18.09.2024.

With reference to the above definitions, it can be said that emotional intelligence represents a person's set of skills for effective personal, social and professional functioning.

### 3. Emotional intelligence capacity model

The ability model of emotional intelligence by Mayer and Salovey, is defined as a group of abilities to cognitively process information related to emotions or to problems arising from the fact of their existence. The authors formulated the most complete theory of emotional intelligence in the 1990s, where they presented a four-branch model of emotional intelligence abilities, the characteristics of which are included in Table 2.

**Table 2.**  
*Emotional intelligence capacity model*

<b>Emotional intelligence</b>			
<b>4. Reflective emotion regulation to support emotional and intellectual development (Emotion management)</b>			
The ability to be open to feelings pleasantly and unpleasantly.	The ability to consciously engage with or disengage from emotions depending on the outcome of an assessment of their informational value or utility.	The ability to consciously track (monitor) emotions in relation to oneself and in relationships with other people (e.g. determining whether and to what extent they are explicit, typical, influential, legitimate).	The ability to control one's own emotions and those of others by moderating negative emotions and enhancing pleasant ones, without suppressing or overestimating the information they may carry.
<b>3. Understanding and analysing emotions; using emotional knowledge</b>			
The ability to name emotions and to understand the relationship between words and emotions as such (e.g. the relationship between , "liking" and , "love").	The ability to interpret the meaning that emotions carry in relation to interpersonal relationships (e.g. sadness often accompanies the loss of a loved one).	The ability to understand complex feelings, such as love combined with hate, or fear combined with surprise.	The ability to anticipate likely changes in emotional states, such as from anger to contentment or from anger to shame.
<b>2. Integrating emotions into thinking processes</b>			
Emotions give higher priority to certain ways of thinking by directing attention to relevant information.	Sufficient "food" and availability of emotions to be generated as an enabler of judgement and memory regarding feelings.	Emotional shifts in mood change an individual's perspective from optimistic to pessimistic, encouraging consideration of many different viewpoints.	Different emotional states affect problem-solving approaches in different ways, e.g. feeling happy promotes inductive reasoning and creativity.
<b>1. Ability to perceive and express emotions</b>			
The ability to identify emotions in one's own body states, feelings and thoughts.	The ability to identify emotions in other people, in art works, etc., through language, sound, appearance and behaviour.	Ability to express emotions accurately and to express emotional needs.	The ability to distinguish between precise and imprecise, sincere and insincere expressions of emotion.

Source: own elaboration based on: Salovey, Sluyter, 1999, pp. 36-37.

The table above shows four branches that represent mental processes ordered by rows: from the most to the least complex process, and by columns: from the most basic abilities to the more advanced ones.

This model represents emotional intelligence as four branches of processes:

*Group I* - the ability to perceive and express emotions. Human beings have an innate ability to perceive so-called primary emotions. However, perceiving secondary emotions, which are more complex, or distinguishing true, sincere emotions from insincere ones, requires learning new skills, cognitive abilities. As they develop, emotions are recognised more effectively and easily, not only in facial expressions, faces and attitudes, but also in art in the broadest sense, nature or objects of various kinds.

*Group II* - emotional use of thinking as the ability to understand and control emotions, to use them in cognitive processes, to think productively, to remember or to evaluate phenomena correctly. In short, it concerns the impact of emotions on intelligence.

*Group III* - a combination of abilities such as analysing and understanding emotions and, as a result, using emotional knowledge. Particularly important here are the abilities to name specific feelings correctly, to be aware of the complexity of certain emotions, emotional states, to be able to link them to specific situations, to determine their cause and to anticipate cause-effect relationships. The ability to identify them, to see the logical sequence in the experience of specific emotions, the relationship between emotional states and situations or their consequences is an extremely useful skill in interpersonal relationships.

*Group IV* - the conscious regulation of emotions so that they are conducive to emotional and intellectual development. The key skill here is to be open to emotions, whether positive or negative, any emotion can be conducive to development, depending on how it is used. What is important here is the ability to separate, at the right moments, emotion from action. Depending on the situation, surrendering to emotions can be beneficial or not, and it is important to know when to let emotions come to the fore and when it is better for the matter at hand to suppress them. Often, a cold re-analysis of the situation and one's own emotions also brings new conclusions and observations which are important for the further development of an individual's emotional intelligence. Awareness of one's own emotions, moods, the relationship between them and their influence on actions is the basis for consciously influencing other people's emotions, e.g. in motivation processes.

In summary, it can be said that the authors of the concept treat emotional intelligence as a set of personal competences of a person, which have a complementary function to purely intellectual abilities. A person endowed with high emotional intelligence is able to perceive emerging emotions, understand and manage them. He or she is also able to use them to support the thinking process.

#### **4. The importance of emotional intelligence in a manager's career**

In the literature, there are numerous confirmations from studies that address the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective human functioning in different areas of life. Some of them show a positive relationship between EI and professional achievement.

This position is shared by D. Goleman, who attributes particular importance to emotional intelligence to people in managerial positions. The author's research shows that the success of a manager's job depends on it. It is therefore a combination of self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and relationship management that has a positive impact on others. Concluding in his research, he identified 12 key competencies that distinguish outstanding leaders,

and managers. These include:

- emotional self-awareness,
- emotional self-control,
- goal-orientation,
- positive world view,
- adaptability,
- empathy,
- organisational awareness,
- ability to influence,
- the role of teacher and mentor,
- conflict management, inspirational leadership,
- teamwork.

The competences included in emotional intelligence are a direct factor for success in many areas of a company's activities, especially in terms of working with people in the broadest sense. Research shows that a high level of emotional intelligence has a significant impact on effectively dealing with all kinds of problems, demands or difficulties that a person encounters in their work.

Currently, a number of phenomena characterised by uncertainty, which came with the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, pose further challenges for managers. These difficult external conditions have a significant impact on companies and the people within them, not only economically and managerially, but also psychologically.

The above prompts the search for an answer to the question: which competences of managers in Polish companies are desired nowadays and do they also include those in the area of emotional intelligence?

An attempt to answer the question posed can begin with an analysis of the opinions of psychology and coaching specialists, which include B. Dyraga, who lists the following as five key competences for times of crisis:

- empathy - as the ability to put oneself in someone else's shoes, empathise and see reality from a different perspective. An empathetic manager is better able to understand the team, to objectively assess an employee's behaviour and actions.
- managing one's own emotions - the most difficult, in the author's opinion, of the five competences of a manager in times of crisis, because it requires solid, process-based work on oneself. This in turn requires that, in order to manage others effectively and responsibly, one must first learn to use one's own resources. One needs to recognise the mechanisms of one's behaviour in a crisis (among the emotions that war has activated, insecurity, anxiety, panic and the need for control come to the fore).
- the ability to talk about emotions in the team - the key here is for the manager not to be afraid of the subject of emotions, to be able to initiate conversations on difficult topics, to allow employees to share their feelings, fears, doubts, and to be able to conduct

an open dialogue in such a way that both parties benefit and are strengthened. The author points out here that organisations that build a mature emotional culture and reckon with the emotions and feelings of the people within it always win in times of crisis and change.

- being flexible and open to change - being able to treat difficulties as challenges rather than problems. You also need to be able to come to terms with a sense of lack of influence, to act from a position of here and now, and to have more trust in people.
- the manager's role as an ambassador for organisational wellbeing - understood as a general state of human wellbeing, encompassing physical, mental and emotional health, as well as life satisfaction and an overall sense of happiness. In today's challenging world, the health and wellbeing of our employees is crucial to the success of any business. Wellbeing in the workplace translates into satisfaction, productivity and overall organisational performance. It is important for a manager to be able to support people in building healthy habits, a positive company atmosphere and positive emotions that motivate others to perform and cooperate. This makes it easier to get through crises.

An analysis of the above list of competences, developed by the cited author, allows us to conclude that emotional intelligence, including a broad understanding of the needs of the human being in the company, and consequently a change in management culture, has gained key importance.

Similar conclusions can be drawn by analysing the results of the 2021 survey of managers in Poland, presented in the House of Skills survey report entitled "Polski menedżer. Praktyki, wyzwania, rozwój". The analysed report shows that what is needed now is a set of qualities of a leader, including competences from the area of emotional intelligence. As an example, composure was mentioned as one of the four most frequently indicated traits - Polish employees expect managers to remain calm, control their emotions and impulses, provide emotional support in stressful situations they constantly face.

In the same report, Polish managers signal that they are aware of the importance of empathy in managing people - they mention it as a component of trust, and at the same time indicate that building trust is the area currently focusing the most attention and energy on how to effectively develop an empathic approach to people in order to reconcile the so-called hard and soft aspects of management: to take care of results and productivity while showing the necessary sensitivity. There are fears of crossing the line beyond which people become less task-oriented, and loose authority as a result. Meanwhile, it turns out that empathy and business effectiveness are complementary, not opposing, areas. This can be seen in the day-to-day, ongoing work of teams, putting the employee at the centre and building their sense of influence and responsibility for results. The starting point is self-awareness of one's own emotions and attitudes, then building a standard of individual, specific managerial practices.

In conclusion, it can be assumed that the Decalogue of desired competences of modern managers is definitely changing. It is indisputable that substantive preparation, including hard competences, intelligence and creativity, are indispensable for managerial positions, but soft skills such as empathy, composure, forbearance or ability to cooperate in an enterprise are gaining in importance. The above may confirm the author's thesis that competencies in the area of emotional intelligence are key competencies of modern managers. Taking into account the uncertainty of events in the external environment of Polish enterprises, managers are currently needed who, in addition to acting efficiently, also possess highly developed emotional competences.

## 5. Summary

A manager's soft skills are a key component of managing people effectively, and among these, developing emotional intelligence is of particular importance. This is the ability to understand, control and effectively manage emotions - both one's own and when dealing with other people. In relations with employees, emotional intelligence plays a decisive role, as it enables a manager to understand the feelings of employees, which influences the building of lasting and positive relationships. A manager who is aware of his or her emotions is better able to recognise and respond to the signals of employees, which is crucial for effective communication.

Meanwhile, research results in this area are not very satisfactory. The Institute for the Development of Emotions, which conducted a study on emotional intelligence in Poland in 2019, showed, among other things, that:

- As many as 75% of those surveyed admitted that they did not control their nerves while at work.
- The overall results for emotional intelligence show that 53% of those surveyed have EI at a low level, 44% at a medium level and only 3% at a high level (the survey concerned those holding top management positions).
- Only 22% of the respondents have a highly developed ability to perceive emotions (43% medium, 35% low), but only 3% can use them at a high level (22% medium, 75% low). The ability to express emotions at a high level was found in only 8% of respondents (52% medium, 39% low), understanding emotions (34% medium, 66% low). On the other hand, referring to emotion management - none of those surveyed have this skill at a high level (38% medium, 62% low).

Deficits in EI are also confirmed by managers in the House of Skills Survey Report, where, when asked about their development needs, they most often indicate factors related to attitudes and personality, which may be a sign of feeling uncomfortable and less confident about their

perceived challenges. More than 36% of managers indicated the need to strengthen relatively fixed aspects of personality and attitudes, areas that are less susceptible to development (empathy, forbearance, patience, courage, creativity, consistency, decisiveness, etc.). Many managers see the need for change in themselves - people in this group may be at greater risk of stress due to feeling out of their comfort zone and less confident. Further indications are competences related to the managerial role: leading a team, the ability to motivate, building a good team atmosphere (15% in total), and personal and interpersonal competences such as assertiveness, communication skills, dealing with stress - 18% in total. About 12% of managers are unable to indicate what they need, which may be a sign of uncertainty about what is expected of them or difficulty in identifying their own competence gaps. It may also be related to a low capacity for insight, reflection, self-diagnosis.

New and difficult challenges mean that the mental resilience of managers needs to be strengthened. Knowing oneself and one's emotions is essential to analyse one's own needs and strengthen adaptability. This means working on managing emotions and dealing with stress. Coaching, workshops, team coaching or support groups that build community, enabling people to learn from each other and share experiences will help.

Developing emotional intelligence is a process that requires conscious effort and practice. A manager wishing to broaden his or her skills in this area can benefit from a variety of strategies, exercises and activities. The basis for development in this area is an understanding of emotional processes in other people, self-motivation mechanisms, and the impact and influence of emotions on employees. By developing competences in the area of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness, a stable sense of self-esteem or self-control, it is possible to meet the challenges posed to managers by the modern business environment.

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