

# SMARTER Workplaces Have a Heart



**Engaged workplaces have a heart**, states Cynthia Kivland, President [Workplace Coach Institute](#) and author, [Smart2Smarter](#), 2011. [Daniel Goleman](#), author "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (Bantam, 1998), and most recently, [The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights](#), 2011 is the leading authority in emotional and social intelligence. His premise is, "sensitivity to emotional states (one's own and others') and effective relationship skills are the critical competencies in today's global, self reliant work environment. Simply put, IQ and expertise are no longer considered the best predictors of performance or leadership effectiveness.

Consider the traditional formula for leadership success as possessing cognitive intelligence, an analytical, detached decision style and getting results, often through people. Most important, you did not show emotional sensitivity, you were not transparent so people knew what you really meant and you did not focus on understanding others first to build rapport. However, the skills employers really want are the ability to build people up, bring them together and inspire them to do their Personal Best.

## Are Smarter Skills a Personality Trait or Skill?

Is social and emotional intelligence a personality trait, either something you have or do not have? Yes, it may be part of one's "hardwired personality" however; the good news is that SMARTER skills can be learned with knowledge, practice and reinforcement! However, as individuals of habit, we often lock into a workstyle that is most comfortable and transmitted as "This is the way I do things." Personality inventories, such as [the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator](#)® or of [FIRO-B](#) have shown that each of us develops a predictable and comfortable "default work style." This workstyle may also be toxic. This "default workstyle" influences how we approach our work and how we interact with others with whom we work. This default style does not change much after the mid 20s, however to create a climate of emotional engagement, leaders must learn to manage and adapt their "style" to the social and emotional connectedness of our global economy.

## Working Smarter to Get Results

The SMARTER skills of social and emotional intelligence are a simply the ability to *intentionally* understand and manage our social interactions and our emotional impact skillfully. The key word in the above sentence is "intentionality". Working smarter is intentionally being aware of the impact you are having on others and adjusting your style to get the best results with people and not through people. It is a heightened awareness to intentionally manage our "default settings" to reduce interpersonal disconnects by understanding and accepting others' needs and styles. Coaching smart(er) workers focuses on building skills in two pillars of SMARTER competencies:

**Personal Competence:** How well we know and manage our strengths and limitations

**Social Competence:** How well we manage our relationships to achieve results with people.

Social and emotional intelligence smarter skills can be learned, yet often it is hard work. It is not simply deciding to read some books on emotional intelligence or take a personality assessment. Developing and sustaining SMARTER skills require a constant -- and often uncomfortable -- commitment to personal and social skill development. It requires a developmental sequence of awareness and skill development from a Focus on You (Personal Competence) to a Focus on Us (Social Competence). A development plan requires skill practice and so the willingness to solicit and accept feedback.

SMARTER skills are best developed using multiple learning mediums- from classroom, self-reflection, assessment, individual and group coaching and development assignments. Remember, SMARTER skills develop best when met with both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards directly related to one's career success (extrinsic reward such as a promotion) and significance (intrinsic reward such as meaningful work). This often requires organizations to take a "hard look" at the behaviors they are tolerating and determine how long and at what cost they want to tolerate the "default style". Remember, there are limits to how much individual's can change behaviors. However, it is possible to increase awareness of how our "default settings" may affect others and learn to self manage this settings to optimize our SMARTER assets and minimize our SMARTER liabilities.

### **A Scientist Learns Being Right All the Time is Not Very Smart**

A brilliant research scientist, promoted to manage a team of very smart people, was not achieving the results she wanted in a performance based outcome environment. As part of an emotional and social intelligence training and coaching program, she received candid feedback that her team believed they could never do anything right. Her thoroughness and critical analysis of work product was creating a "risk-averse work climate" and the leader were perceived as "arrogant." Team members stopped trying to offer information or ask for feedback as they felt her opinionated mind was closed to new information.

The leader's strengths were readily acknowledged as a brilliant researcher, writer and mentor to others. The leader agreed to work on managing her defensive and perceived arrogant behaviors. First, she set a development goal to acknowledge and manage any disruptive behaviors, habits and emotions that interfere with hearing other's perspective. Second, she set team and individual meetings to receive and give feedback – the skill of reciprocity. Third, she shared team leadership by delegating tasks and outcomes to team members.

*I have become aware that when my default workstyle is emotionally hijacked or exaggerated, I exhibit a directive, intellectual and rational style, debating my "truth" instead of gathering perspective from others. I learned that my tendency is to over intellectualize, analyze and debate everything, focusing initially on the flaws of a decision or outcome than supporting the implementation. I guess this makes me seem less excited or interested in others ideas or feedback than I really am. I can understand how individuals feel that I think I am smarter than or superior to you. That is not my intention, but I realize your perception is the reality. Your performance success is influenced by how you perceive my style. I want you to know that when I fall into those habits of behaviors, it is OK for you to let me know the effect it is having on you. Give me feedback about my behavior is what I want and need to be a more effective leader for our team.*

As the above example illustrates, the first step to develop SMARTER skills is to identify and optimize strengths, build an emotional climate of engagement, know and manage your limitations and adapt your style to the situation or the person.

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