

Zero in

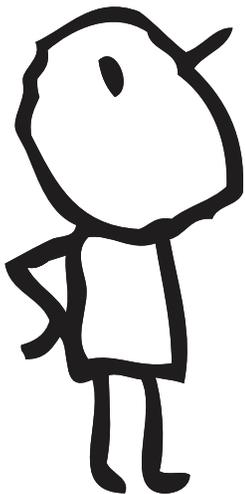
ON KNOWLEDGE

Selling your EI Solutions:

Tips for Practitioners

Written by Kate Salmon and Wendy Gordon

Trainers, OD specialists, and consultants agree that the most challenging element of any training and development initiative can be getting organizational buy-in. With something as widely applicable and holistically beneficial as EI assessment, it can be difficult to decide which specific selling points to hit over the course of a short proposal. Here, experts in adult learning and business strategy offer some guidelines on building a business case and pitching your EI expertise.



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Building the Cup

The golden rule of selling any development training is that no two sales pitches should be the same. Training and development is a service, and as such, it cannot come pre-packaged and ready for use. It needs to be customized in order to adapt to the specific needs of the company and their work environment.

To use a common analogy, the problem with tea is that you cannot sell it to someone without a cup. No matter how thirsty your clients are or how delicious the tea may be, it will burn their hands or spill on the floor without the proper vessel to contain it. In order for your sales pitch to be successful, it should be approached in the same way; help the stakeholder find their cup before you talk about filling it. Pinpoint their issues before discussing the solutions. Identifying key stakeholders' "pain" in monetary terms is the single most effective way of speaking to their needs and getting total buy-in to your services. Although EI assessment may not be the be-all and end-all solution to any workplace challenges, evidence demonstrates that it is a powerful means that can maximize an organization's time, money, and effort.

The U.S. Air Force used emotional intelligence to select recruiters, increasing their ability to predict successful recruiters by nearly three-fold. The immediate gain was a savings of \$3 million annually.

The biggest objection to most assessment, training, and coaching programs is justifying the initial outlay of funding. Many organizations require a customized business case with estimated ROI and case studies of others who have saved money using the same assessment. This article offers several examples of organizations that have benefited financially from using EI measures in selection and development initiatives. Several methods of measuring the organizational results of a training or other performance improvement intervention have been modeled (for example, Brinkerhoff, 2003; Kaufman & Keller, 1994; Phillips, 1994; Hamblin, 1974; Kirkpatrick, 1959). But the most powerful tactic, says Sylvia Lee, Manager of Learning & Organizational Development of the Northern Lights Health Region of Alberta, is to get organizations to rethink their definition of ROI.

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Traditionally, Lee explains, organizations measure the quantity (i.e., the number of hours workers spend in training) rather than the quality of the training. Tallying ROI in this way rarely accounts for the value training has; such as its impact on productivity and profitability. So how do you measure prospective performance improvement? Lee recommends identifying the performance factors that are measured by the organization so that you can speak to the key metrics of interest. Common performance factors include:

- Increase retention of strong performers
- Reduce turnaround time
- Increase sales
- Expand market share
- Increase engagement
- Increase customer satisfaction
- Streamline processes

American Express Financial Advisors' sales increased 18% after attending an Emotional Competence Program. Sales in regions where the managers attended the program increased 11% over sales where sales managers did not attend this program.

One powerful method is to gather performance ratings from the managers of prospective trainees. To calculate the un-leveraged employee costs, multiply staff salaries by the percentage at which workers are not performing (e.g., if 20% of employees are performing at 90%, 25% performing at 75% and so on, then multiply the salaries of those performing at 90% by 10%, and so on).

	SALARY	UN-LEVERAGED PERFORMANCE	UN-LEVERAGED EMPLOYEE COST
Bob	30 K	20%	6 K
Sally	50 K	10%	5 K
Susan	90 K	30%	27 K
Total	170 K		38 K

For these individuals, 23 % of employee costs are un-leveraged.

This way, you can estimate the cost of low performance and potential gain. In your business case, indicate:

1. Un-leveraged employees costs
2. Potential cost deficit on operating costs
3. Total potential gain through performance improvement

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This strategy demonstrates that EI is important to the organization and its success at all levels. When performance metrics, selection criteria, development plans, and organizational goals are complementary, employees get a consistent message that the organization will support them in achieving its goals.

In a study evaluating the development of an EI training program at American Express, Cary Cherniss suggests infusing Emotional Intelligence into the organization in a variety of ways. "Multiple infusion helps to normalize and generalize the concept," Cherniss reports. "It also creates a culture in which people are repeatedly reminded of what they have learned and thus are more likely to apply it on the job."

In fact, the more Emotional Intelligence can be worked into each of these three areas, the more likely the organization will be to enhance outcomes throughout its system. This multi-dimensional approach has synergistic effects as the successes complement one another.

A systemic approach means considering not only the organization's selection system, but also how their development and reward systems; together, these combine to create the organizations' human capital strategy. Emotional Intelligence can be worked into a multi-system solution so that initiatives such as succession planning, hiring, coaching, and leadership development are all aligned with business goals. In this way, you can first identify the most prevalent issues, discuss other methods the company may have tried, and ensure your EI assessment and coaching plan complements the organization's HR activities.



Understanding your Client

In order to finish building your client's cup you need to connect with them on a deeper level; you need to understand their emotions and be capable of managing them. The ability-based model of Emotional Intelligence was designed to facilitate successful social interaction by harnessing, rather than avoiding, emotional involvement. You are entreating a potential client to incorporate EI practices and principles into their work life, so why not do the same?

How much stress is your client under today? How happy are they? Gauging the emotional environment from the instant you enter into it will help you to anticipate and cater to any fluctuations therein, which in turn will ensure that you are always adapting to the situation.

According to the MSCEIT ability-based model (Caruso, 2004), EI is comprised of four separate skills – identifying, using, understanding and managing emotion – which can build on each other to create an Emotionally Intelligent interaction. This means that throughout a brief or extensive sales pitch, you need to focus on:

1. **Identifying** how you and your client are feeling
2. **Using** these feelings to guide the thinking and reasoning of your client and yourself
3. **Understanding** how feelings might change and develop as the meeting unfolds, and being prepared for these changes
4. **Managing** to stay open to the data of feelings and integrating emotion into decisive action

For many new coaches and trainers, unaccustomed to the role EI plays in everyday interactions, it can be easy to make an unsuccessful sales pitch simply because your client is in the wrong mood or becomes frustrated and shuts down the communication process. Maybe you've had some sales pitches like this yourself:

You: What do you consider the biggest hindrance to the efficient functioning of your employees right now?

Client: Probably the consistently high stress level of the job.

You: Stress is quite common in the workplace and in life. I can make a point of focusing on the stress management techniques of each of your employees and discuss some exercises-

Client: But there's only so much stress people can take, no matter how well they manage it.

You: Right, but more often than not it's a person's response to a situation that dictates the level of stress they feel as a result.

Client: I'm sorry, I don't think 'coping techniques' are really what we're looking for.

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An Emotionally Intelligent sales pitch acknowledges the client's own feelings of anxiety at the mention of job pressure, and uses these feelings to guide the discussion rather than undermining them by presenting a solution too quickly. With more careful attention to the data of emotion, the sales pitch might go like this:

You: What do you consider the biggest hindrance to the efficient functioning of your employees right now?

Client: Probably the consistently high stress level of the job.

You: What contributes to the work being so high-stress?

Client: I'm not sure if it's the work so much as the way the work is distributed. Everyone shares responsibility for everything, leading inevitably to disagreements.

You: And do you feel that the disagreements themselves are what cause anxiety?

Client: They're responsible for a great deal of it, yes. Also, when people are arguing less work gets done, and we fall behind.

You: So would you say a lack of efficient teamwork is the biggest hindrance to productivity?

Client: Definitely.

You: I know of a process, recently being used by several top organizations, which could help confirm some of your suspicions and provide a proven framework for organizational change if need be. Would you be interested in discussing this further?

By listening to your client's emotions as well as their reasoning, you are more likely to pinpoint the benefits of EI training that are closest to their heart and deliver a sales pitch that speaks to their gut as well as their logic. Remember: Identify your prospective client's feelings, use these feelings to guide them in their exploration of issues and possibilities, understand and prepare for their reactions to the EI concepts and constructs, and above all manage to stay flexible with both your own emotions and theirs. If you appeal to them emotionally, their thoughts and minds will follow.

EI was used to evaluate which scores predict success for debt collectors. Star performers collected 100% of quota while low performers collected 47%. New recruits who had been hired on the basis of their high scores and those who received special training collected 163% of quota over 3 months.

Selling your Service

Now that you have a concise and coherent understanding of what your client is looking for, you have finished building their cup and it's time to talk about filling it. The most effective way to fill your client's cup, thereby fulfilling a training need, is to demonstrate a coherent understanding of the service you provide. In the world of learning and development, selling yourself as a trainer, consultant or coach is just as important as selling your training product. You want to garner your client's respect by coming across as a competent and well-informed potential business partner.

Your first priority is to ensure that your description of the training program is direct and succinct, emphasizing the aspects of EI development that are unique and advantageous to the organization. To make EI training stand out, try incorporating a few of these discussion topics into your sales pitch:

1. Emphasize the intuitive nature of theoretical models of emotional intelligence, which allows adults to monitor their behavior and gauge their own progress.
2. Discuss what development strategies may be implemented in order to build on the individual's unique life experiences and expertise.
3. Discuss your goal-setting regimen in detail so your client understands what tangible results they can expect to see.
4. Explain how the benefits of EI training will be self-evident to everyone upon receiving personalized feedback on an assessment of their emotional and social functioning.

The more you know about the myriad applications and benefits of Emotional Intelligence, the more likely you are to help your client appreciate its merit. Listen carefully to what your client is responding most positively to and tailor your sales pitch accordingly. By communicating an in-depth knowledge of your client's needs and the specific ways in which EI training can benefit, you convey a competence and professionalism which will make the client more willing to entrust you with their staff and resources.

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