

our views

A chance to understand where we stand on key organisational and training topics

Focus on emotional intelligence

A critical skill for 21st century leadership or a new and passing fad? It was with a mixture of self-interest and curiosity about emotional intelligence that led me to embark on accreditation with occupational psychologists, JCA. I hoped it would help me both personally and professionally – and it did both.

The term emotional intelligence (EI) gained universal recognition after being popularised by Daniel Goleman in the 90s; his name is now synonymous with it. A scientist and journalist first, he captured the issues intellectually and rigorously and brought them to the attention of a wider public. Critically, Goleman suggested that EI was a greater predictor of success in personal and professional life than traditional IQ tests.

So what does it mean? Far from being about soft skills, EI is based on a clear model of awareness – self and others – and this provides the foundation on which to manage oneself and improve relationships with others.

The JCA process involves the participant completing a questionnaire, which is either a self report or a 360° feedback version. Self reports go much deeper and a skilled coach works through the feedback report. The 360° version looks at observable behaviours – not at what's driving those behaviours.

The questionnaire attempts to isolate attitudes and presents another dimension that it believes underpins the awareness level. JCA suggests that our ability to use EI is limited by internal interferences, beliefs and attitudes developed in childhood. As a practising coach, this really made sense to me. The good news is that all commentators agree we can improve our EI – to some extent it happens naturally with life experience. The JCA tool is a great way of speeding up the process by forcing us to acknowledge what might be holding us back.



Gary Morgan
(Gary is a Senior Associate at Interaction with over 15 years' facilitation and coaching experience)



Jo Maddocks,
co-founder of JCA and author of the ie (JCA's EI tool) has contributed the following in response to Gary's article:

"Change is easy; it's not changing back that is difficult. One reason for creating the ie questionnaire was to help people to make a shift in their behaviour that would be enduring and habitual. The ie helps people to make sustainable change by addressing the attitudes and feelings that underpin their behaviour."

facts & figures



Seeing the wood for the trees

Are you eligible for financial help for training?

There are many funding initiatives around to help employers build the talent of their workforce. According to the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 'Now is the time to invest in skills – and real help is available'.

But what is this help and how do you get it? There's so much information available that it's not easy to know where to start. To shed light on where to go to find out more information, here is a list of useful websites:

traintogain.gov.uk This national service helps employers of all sizes and sectors support skills improvement for employees

isc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy The Learning Skills Council is a public body that supports apprenticeships and helps employers develop the skills of their workforce

dius.gov.uk This is the official site for Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (part of disbanded Department of Trade and Industry)

englandsrdas.com The Regional Development Agency (RDA) aims to improve levels of learning and skills across the regions

businesslink.gov.uk/realhelp This free service (managed by the RDA) can offer employers advice on support packages for training

This is by no means a definitive list! But hopefully it will point you in the right direction.

you're in good company

Our clients

Alliance Boots / Burges Salmon /
Construction Skills / Dollond &
Aitchison / DTZ / Homes and
Communities Agency /
Environment Agency / First Capital
Connect / Meat Hygiene Service /
National Grid plc / National
Probation Service / Ofcom /
Severn Trent plc / Somerfield /
Southeastern / Threadneedle /
United Business Media

Interaction learning and development

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Spring 2009

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our views

Emotional intelligence - critical skill or passing fad?

facts & figures

Useful information on funding initiatives for training.

www.interaction-ld.com

our work

From graduate to senior leader development, coaching to Corporate Social Responsibility, our projects over the last few months reflect the diversity of our work and the flexibility of our approach.



Developing high potential leaders

We've been working with United Business Media (UBM) for nine years on their Leadership Development Programme and are particularly proud of what it has achieved.

This intense modular programme blends a range of experiential approaches – outdoor tasks, work with professional actors, and CSR projects – with inputs on key leadership theories, group discussion, 360° feedback, and MBTI®. The result is a programme which genuinely helps these senior managers develop their leadership behaviour to motivate their teams and drive the business forward. **UBM's Head of Training and Development** has this to say:

"Each year for the last four years we've run a Leadership Development Programme in partnership with Interaction for a group of 16 senior managers: our leaders of the future.

What we wanted from the programme, and what we achieved, was a group

of leaders who, whilst celebrating their individuality, can:

- think and act like leaders
- inspire themselves and their teams to constantly improve and evolve
- take action to change and shape the culture of the organisation
- grow their areas of the business
- develop colleagues to support the development of our talent across the organisation.

When looking for a partner, Interaction impressed us right from the start. Rather than telling us what we needed, they asked us what we wanted and worked hard to provide us with a solution that exactly matched what we needed. In the planning and design process, they worked incredibly hard to really get to know our business, the context in which we work, the issues our managers are facing and our culture; this meant they got it exactly right.

And it has shown in the finished programme – which has never really been a finished programme, more a work in progress; each year our requirements have changed and Interaction have changed their solution to match. What hasn't changed is the care they've taken to ensure the programme fits and the support they've provided. They've always been working with us not for us, and have injected a real wow factor into the learning modules."



The power of coaching

We run a number of development modules as part of Somerfield's graduate programme. From the outset our client has been clear that it expects this fast-track modular programme to equip graduates with the behavioural and business skills necessary to hit the ground running and add value to the business as quickly as possible; all the training must achieve results.

So one of the main challenges was to ensure learning was business focused, practical and, importantly, easily transferable to work. Each module is supported by pre-work, transfer of learning projects, and learning reviews. Each graduate also has a mentor. But more tailored support was needed, and coaching was the answer.

After each module, graduates have the option to call on a team of Interaction coaches to work through situations in a 1:1 session or on the phone. As this graduate testimony shows, this approach has enhanced learning in-between modules and contributed to the widely-held view that the programme is amongst the best around:

"Part of my graduate programme with Somerfield involved training and development modules run by Interaction. Being a graduate trainee, this was a great opportunity to sharpen my behavioural skills, especially around problem solving and influencing people. I had experienced some training in my previous roles, but found it difficult to put the learning into practice back at work as I had no support after the training was finished.

From the start, Interaction encouraged coaching sessions, where I've had the opportunity to discuss one-on-one with an Interaction coach my learning and the way I intend to put it to use. The sessions have an open agenda, which gives the trainee a chance to open up and discuss particular problematic situations. This is a great support tool and makes me conscious about the change I am aiming for, for myself, my team, and colleagues.

The Interaction coach has helped me to bring about behavioural changes needed for my growth at work, helped me in creating win-win situations, opened up my thought process, and supported my influencing and problem solving skills."
2008 Somerfield graduate trainee

A yurt experience

Staying in yurts in January whilst on a programme to develop leadership skills may seem like an unusual idea, but it was surprisingly effective. Our client had links with a yurt village in Devon and asked us to design a module for a group of senior managers to enhance their leadership skills whilst making the most of the venue's unique qualities.

As this was the fourth and final module, we needed to provide plenty of opportunities for the managers to put their learning into practice as well as develop their understanding of the impact of their leadership style.

The programme blended inputs on coaching and performance management, work with professional actors, a full-day outdoor Corporate Social Responsibility project, and individual feedback in small groups, with dedicated time to consolidate the transfer of learning back to work.

Along with the main body of the programme, the group had to organise itself to help run the venue itself - keeping the log burning stoves in the yurts alight and helping prepare meals.

It's fair to say that the programme intentionally took many people outside their comfort zones. But, as a result, delegates told us they learnt more about their leadership style and behaviour in general and left the programme with comprehensive action plans on how to be even more effective leaders back at work.



Graduate induction with a difference

We recently ran a showcase session with our client, National Grid, entitled 'A creative approach to graduate induction' at the AGR Graduate Development Conference in London.

"The conference attracted around 160 people which, in the current economic climate, is testimony to the importance that businesses place on developing their graduate talent pipeline properly." **Carl Gilleard, Chief Executive - AGR**

Our session explored the vital role induction plays in helping graduates make a swift and effective transition from university to work and how the traditional days of induction through death by PowerPoint are long gone.

To add maximum value, our view is that induction must accelerate graduates' understanding of both the business and the behaviours required to be effective at work. Our work with National Grid has turned the traditional model of induction on its head to provide an experience that stresses the importance of self responsibility, learning through experience, and taking initiative.

Our creative and experiential approach achieves this; it involves a business-focused project, employee interviews, team-working exercises, and a presentation to senior managers – high stakes.

Our session was very well attended and despite being tight on time, we achieved what we set out to do, providing delegates with a flavour of the nature and content of the National Grid induction. Recent graduates and our client provided their first-hand perspective to add richness to the session.

Delegates told us the interactive and energetic way we ran the session went down particularly well in our post-lunch slot; 86% of delegates rated the session useful or very useful.

Moving towards accreditation

We're pursuing accreditation for some of our first line and middle manager leadership and management programmes with the Institute of Leadership Management (ILM).

This is in direct response to market changes and the fact that clients are increasingly interested in the potential for programmes to be recognised by an accredited body. We will continue to maintain our strong focus on bespoke behavioural programmes with the option for clients to link leadership and management training to an ILM recognised qualification.

Our strong administrative processes and pool of experienced facilitators lends themselves perfectly to offering this option, so this is a natural and exciting new step for us.



Welcoming our new training consultant

We're really pleased to welcome Bernadette Callanan to Interaction as a full-time Training Consultant.

Berni has over 10 years' experience working within blue chip companies as an internal and external consultant. She started her career in sales before moving into management and sales training within Yell. She joins us after four years as a freelance consultant and facilitator of outdoor team and leadership programmes and will be heavily involved in the design and delivery of a range of our programmes.

Enjoy our new look website

We've just re-launched our website with a new look and feel. In doing this, our aim is to give the site a more polished look, make it easier to navigate and give a more tangible feel of what we stand for and how we work.

It's been totally rebuilt on a fantastic platform, which means we'll be able to make it more interactive and user-friendly as time goes on. Quite simply, it's more of a pleasure to use.

Be sure to check out our blog where you can keep up to date with the work we are doing and interesting things we're picking up from elsewhere on the web.