

## Emotional Intelligence for Casino Workers

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the capacity to create positive outcomes for ourselves and others. Being emotionally intelligent means being aware of, understanding, and appropriately expressing/handling emotions—one's own and those of others. EQ is the ability to build people up, bring them together, and motivate them to do their best.

Whereas IQ, a measurement of one's capacity to master precision learning, is static over time, EQ is a skill that can be developed and/or enhanced at any point in our lives. And although IQ does not predict success in work or life, study after study has shown a strong correlation between EQ and a person's success in both work and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, emotional intelligence is an important skill to acquire.

Most, if not all, jobs in the Gaming Industry are extremely stressful and require great amounts of human interaction—with customers and other employees. When employees in customer-service based positions demonstrate a lack of emotional intelligence, it reflects poorly on the organization, and reduces customer satisfaction. Therefore, it is in the best interest of gaming organizations to take steps to proactively provide training and staff development in managing anger, managing stress, improving communication skills, and enhancing emotional intelligence.

Just as laughter serves as an indicator of emotional intelligence at work, rampant anger, fear, apathy, or sullen silence signal the opposite. In a survey of more than a thousand U.S. workers, 42 percent reported incidences of yelling and other kinds of verbal abuse in their workplaces, and almost 30 percent admitted to having yelled at a co-worker themselves. Such disturbing encounters wreak havoc emotionally, as demonstrated by studies in which physiological responses were monitored during arguments. Verbal attacks send painful emotional messages of disgust or contempt, emotionally hijacking the recipient, particularly when the attack comes from a boss or spouse whose opinion carries a lot of weight.

Often, people think of anger management as being exclusively for individuals mandated by courts, Human Resource Managers, Employee Assistance Programs, or ultimatum-issuing spouses. Once enrolled in classes, however, people quickly recognize the value of using these skills in all aspects of daily functioning.

Before beginning a structured anger management program, every client should complete a computer-scored Anger Management Map. This assessment determines his or her level of functioning in the following areas: anger management, stress management, emotional intelligence, and communications.

Emotional intelligence is by far the most popular of the aforementioned modules. It is closely related to empathy, sensitivity to others, compassion, and self awareness. It is what distinguishes persons who make you feel comfortable, optimistic, laugh, and feel good about yourself from those who you avoid due to contagious negativism that causes you to feel gloom and discomfort. For customer-service workers, such as Casino workers, it is especially important to not radiate pessimism; glum people simply don't gamble as much as those who are cheerful.

Surprisingly, in the United States, Canada, England and Bermuda, the largest number of referrals to anger management programs that use the emotional intelligence model come from businesses and governmental agencies. These organizations tend to be most concerned with the bottom line, productivity, profit, and good morale. Understanding the powerful role of emotions in the workplace sets the best leaders apart from the rest, with noticeable differences in results and the retention of talent, as well as all-important intangibles, such as morale, motivation, and commitment. Effective anger management classes reduce staff turnover, sick day usage, interpersonal conflict, and low morale. As stated previously, the morale in a casino is practically proportional to its productivity and profit.

Here are some case studies that illustrate the positive effects of anger management.

Several months ago a young father joined one of our Saturday accelerated classes, because he was concerned over his growing impatience with, and negative response to, his infant son. During his first session, he quickly realized that this "impatience" was also occurring at his business, where he was responsible for managing fifty employees. He also acknowledged being frequently abrasive in interactions with his wife. Over a ten session period, as he began making changes in his sensitivity to others. He increased his use of assertive communication, rather than passive-aggressive or aggressive communication and was able to see constructive changes in his relationships with others, as well as in his self-esteem.

In another example, an executive of a major motion picture company was ordered to attend an executive coaching/anger management class after verbally abusing a member of his senior staff during a meeting. Initially, this executive denied the need for help and protested his referral to an anger management program. An initial assessment interview revealed his style of communication was aggressive, his level of stress was high, his emotional intelligence was low, and finally, his skills in managing anger were poor. In short, there was a lot of room for improvement in all four areas covered by our curriculum. During his ten week individual coaching sessions, he was promoted at his company and received a hefty raise. After one year, he is now an advocate for education in emotional intelligence for all managers and supervisors in his company.

Forty percent of our referrals come from business and industry. Self-referrals are the third largest source of referrals to our classes. Many of our new referrals come from participants who have successfully completed either executive coaching or anger management classes. Thirty percent of anger management referrals come from the criminal justice system which includes the courts, probation and parole.

In our third example, a man decided to take his toddler son for a ride on his Harley Davidson motorcycle. A neighbor reported the incident to the police, and the man was subsequently arrested and charged with child endangerment. As a result of this offense, he was ordered to attend a one year anger management class with a focus of emotional intelligence. After attending the required number of classes, the man thanked the Judge who sentenced him. He also called his local Adult Education High School and recommended that it offer anger management and emotional intelligence education to the community as a public service.

These three rather disparate examples show that anger management education is appropriate for everyone, and it can positively affect a client's life.

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new concept that holds considerable promise in teaching us the skills to better relate to each other. Improving relations leads to positive outcomes in many areas of human interaction. Human interaction is a necessary aspect of any job in the gaming industry. Therefore, in short, developing and employing emotional intelligence skills can be both financially and emotionally beneficial to casino employees.