

Evolving from IQ to EQ to CQ in Recruitment

By David W Smith B.Comm, CMC, MCInst.M, RPM
david@logiaconsulting.ca



Have you ever been confused or discouraged when you've discovered that a new hire isn't fitting in, is not performing as expected or is not who you thought they were? What happened? Their resume showed they had the IQ and technical skills. They displayed the emotional intelligence (EQ) we were testing for in the interview. Where did they fall off the rails?

In our leadership consulting practice, I have spoken to many recruiters within organizations across North America on that very topic. I routinely hear that roughly 50 to 75% of hires are solid. Sounds somewhat encouraging, but that means that 25 to 50% of hires are less than perfect and are potential recipes for weak performance, shallow engagement, team sabotage and perhaps in due course, de-hiring. Granted, the percentages varied by industry and organization with some experiencing higher levels of natural or planned turnover, but my findings overall have been disconcerting.

In nearly 30 years of previous corporate senior and executive management experience, I was grateful to find that over 95% of my hiring choices were solid. But, I remember the handful of wrong choices which left me with lingering regrets over the severance costs and lost productivity. And worse still, occasional night sweats over the wear and tear inflicted on team atmosphere from the bad hiring choices.

Research from The Human Capital Institute suggests that one of the most important manager competencies for the future is the ability to "hire, develop, engage, and retain the right people for the job." (Jenson, Aldrich, Maximizing Workforce Contribution) Yet, according to a 2012 study by Development Dimensions International, managers in the hiring process consistently make three common mistakes:

1. They ask questions that do not provide them with useful information about how the candidate will actually perform on the job.
2. They don't use a process to systematically evaluate the responses of candidates.



3. They rely on gut instinct to make the final decision, often ignoring critical information about the candidate's 'fit to the job'.

To address these issues, organizations must thoroughly identify job-relevant factors that predict success and utilize a variety of diagnostic tools to assess candidates on those specific factors. This can serve to eliminate some of the subjective reliance on gut instinct. It is also important to have managers and recruiters who are skilled at interviewing and who have the ability to utilize open ended questions that target a candidate's work ethic, personality, work-style, attitudes, workplace values, passion and cultural fit. (Bal 2013)

It's a challenge to find the right people for the job. It requires individuals who not only have the technical or professional skills (IQ) required to succeed, but also the attitude, personal discipline, and people skills required for alignment and fit with the organization and its values (EQ).

Business author, Ram Charan has found that 70% of organizations say that they have an insufficient pipeline of talent for leadership and strategic jobs, and that stop-gap measures such as quick hires have 40% failure rates within the first 12 months. Making quick decisions or poor decisions that result in hiring the wrong person can be costly. Experience shows that managers tend to spend a great deal of their time dealing with poor or problem performers. This often results from the temptation to hastily screen applicants in the heat of the moment and hire primarily for skill and experience to get the job filled, rather than for fit or alignment with the organization, or for the character and personal leadership of the individual. This is why we often hear the quote "Organizations hire for skill, but fire for character."

But what is Character, this elusive Character Quotient (CQ)? What can be done?

First and foremost, consider placing a greater emphasis on seeking the CQ, by hiring for character, attitude, personal leadership, values and cultural fit. Be wary of first impressions about IQ from resumes and reference alone. When candidates are the right fit, hire and then train for skills.

So, what do you look for in a candidate to determine a healthy level of character (CQ)? An ideal candidate is, first of all, someone who is consistently the same person both privately and publicly. (Croteau 2013). And, they have constructive attitudes and beliefs and demonstrate

solid commitments to making choices and acting in a manner aligned with their attitudes and beliefs. (Jenson et al.)

The candidate with constructive character traits also demonstrates passion, personal discipline, an accurate self-image and believes the best of self and others. They embrace healthy principles, values, set goals and have a sense of purpose and vision. They see the 'big picture' and are healthy contributors within the workplace. Finally, they commit to living out these attitudes and beliefs every day in their inter-personal relationships, work/life balance, adaptability, innovation, perseverance and ongoing personal growth.

Tips for Adding Character (CQ) to the Hiring Process (Jenson, Aldrich)

- ✓ Avoid making rushed hiring decisions based on gut instinct and/or first impression of IQ only
- ✓ Assess candidates for cultural fit, values alignment, attitude, and other job-fit characteristics beyond functional skills (IQ)
- ✓ Have managers identify the qualities of the individual that are critical to the long term success of your organization (EQ,CQ)
- ✓ Use a standard process or toolset to assess for character, personality, and other distinguishing traits (EQ,CQ)

"Watch your thoughts, for they become words. Watch your words, for they become actions. Watch your actions, for they become habits. Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny." Charles Reade (1814-1884)

These insightful words, spoken a couple centuries ago, are still relevant today as we attempt to build healthy and productive workplaces and corporate cultures. As you consider your hiring processes to build your organization, continue to give due consideration to the IQ and technical skills so that newly hired employees 'Can Do' their jobs. And then, ratchet up your process to also explore character and behaviour (EQ & CQ) in candidates so that you can be confident that they 'Will Do' the job because they truly fit the role, the team and the organizational culture.

David W. Smith, B.Comm, CMC, RPM. Principal, Logia Consulting Inc. "emPOWERING Leaders... with Human Capital Consulting, Coaching and Training" david@logiaconsulting.ca 306.373.1998