

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TESTING
OF POLICE OFFICER APPLICANTS FOR
A SMALL URBAN AGENCY

Article

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Intelligence or IQ, has been a long-standing measure of one's ability to solve problems and think through complex issues. IQ remains a valid measure for projecting a person's ability to compete in an academic or scientific setting.¹ College admittance examinations have been the standard, relied on by colleges and universities for over a century. These admittance examinations are based on a person's IQ and continue to be very reliable. IQ testing is very structured and administered in a classroom setting with pen and paper. The results of IQ are very precise, easy to verify, and are widely accepted.

Emotional intelligence is sometimes referred to as EI or EQ, not to be confused with IQ. In their book, The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace, Cary Cherniss and Daniel Goleman described emotional intelligence as the following: "Emotional Intelligence, at the most general level, refers to the abilities to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others."²

The term emotional intelligence had not been coined as late as 1981. However, understanding one's emotions, social situation, and people's interests is not a new concept.

In The Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle said, "Anyone can become angry - that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way - this is not easy."³ Aristotle's description of directing one's emotions is as valid now as it was then. Tom Esensten of Organizational Effectiveness Consulting portrayed Aristotle's account of emotional intelligence as having the right reaction at the right time with the right person.⁴

Theodore Roosevelt also recognized the importance of emotional intelligence and once said, "The most important single ingredient in the formula of success is knowing how to get along with people."⁵

Emotional intelligence does not ignore IQ, but builds upon it. Intelligence, or IQ, puts one into the arena while emotional intelligence makes one successful while in the arena. A person must have a certain level of intelligence. Emotional intelligence builds on the foundation of a person's IQ.

While intelligence cannot be taught, emotional intelligence can be. A person can be taught the fundamentals of mathematics, reading and geography; however, these and other subjects do not increase a person's IQ. On the other hand, if an individual is taught social conduct, etiquette, and personal responsibility, it will have a direct impact on their emotional intelligence. According to Becky Ung, author of What You Wish Is What You Get, An Approach to Increase Your Emotional Intelligence and Potential and Wonderful EQ Beautiful Life, emotional intelligence has been informally referred to as common sense, street smarts, and the ability to say or do the right thing at the right time.⁶

Cherniss and Goleman described emotional intelligence as most prevalent within four domains, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These domains are also critical for a peace officer to master if he or she is to be successful in his or her career. A peace officer must be aware of himself or herself, aware of those around him or her, and understand the interaction of people and how a police officer's presence can impact relationships.

Emotional intelligence testing and training of police officer applicants can take place anytime, from the academy through advanced officer training. However, it is most effective if it can be applied as early as possible. The preferred time for testing police officer applicants is just prior to the start of their academy training, or if administered in the academy, as close to the beginning as practical. This will accomplish two things.

First, if an applicant is found to lack the aptitude for emotional intelligence, he or she can be removed from the process at an early stage. This would save the sponsoring police agency money by not having to train an applicant who would most likely fail or have an unproductive law enforcement career. By removing the applicant, it would make room for an applicant with a greater aptitude for emotional intelligence and a higher likelihood to succeed in his or her career in law enforcement.

The other reason for beginning emotional intelligence testing as early as possible in the hiring process is for the benefit of the applicant. By recognizing and applying the lessons of emotional intelligence early in a police officer applicant's career, he or she will avoid the many pitfalls that many new police officers make. He or she will be able to resolve many problems by understanding what the real issue is and how to successfully deal with the people involved in the issue.

A small urban police agency is a term that is loosely used. For the purpose of this article, an urban police agency of 50 sworn officers or less is the model. The year 2008 was selected as it gives an agency enough time to affect change while not being so far off that it has no relevance.

To explore the role of emotional intelligence testing of police officer applicants for a small urban agency by 2008, a panel of experts, representing various fields and perspectives was assembled. The purpose of this group was to give further direction and insight into the disciplines of emotional intelligence, police officer applicant testing, and training and comparisons between large and small sized police agencies.

This panel of professionals represented law enforcement, psychology, private security, fire service, an author of emotional intelligence books, a private background investigator, and a

polygraph examiner. They identified several emerging trends that could have a significant, or minimal, impact on this topic. The panel also identified a series of what they felt were most likely future events that would impact the role of emotional intelligence testing of police officer applicants for a small urban agency. The nominal group technique was used for this process to forecast future trends and events.

Police administrators must look to the future and make decisions today that will most likely bring desired, or at least anticipated results, in the future. Among the most significant things police administrators do is selecting personnel to hire, promote, discipline, transfer, and prepare to lead the organization into the future. Emotional intelligence can be the catalyst to successful personnel decisions.

In developing a strategic plan, ideally, emotional intelligence testing of police officer applicants would begin prior to their placement in an academy. Police agencies would process applicants in a similar manner as they currently do, giving written, physical agility, medical and psychological testing as well as completing a thorough background and polygraph screening.

Typically, small police departments, under 50 sworn officers, do not have their own psychological units. Officers and civilian employees have many collateral duties and speciality assignments in addition to their primary assignments. Employees are rotated through any number of assignments, giving as many officers as possible the opportunity to experience various assignments. These smaller agencies will generally contract with private individuals or companies for professional services, such as background investigators, polygraph examiners, and psychological testing and therapy.

Ideally, once police officer applicants have been identified, and prior to their academy training, smaller police departments would contract with experts in the field of emotional intelligence. The applicants would receive training in emotional intelligence that will enhance their ability to interact with people. The emotional intelligence training would increase their likelihood of successfully complete the basic academy and enhance their effectiveness as police officers. This would also be a part of the screening process. Individuals who demonstrate a clear inability to effectively interact with others and who lack the interpersonal skills required to be a police officer would be dropped from the processes at this point.

By enhancing the skill level of police officer applicants, while eliminating those applicants who lack the emotional intelligence skills to be successful, smaller urban police agencies will benefit by hiring more qualified police officers. There will also be a substantial savings of time and money by identifying and eliminating applicants who would struggle and ultimately fail, either in the academy, on probation, or who would always be a marginal employee.

A stakeholder analysis is a technique used in identifying individuals and groups that might have an interest in the implementation or outcome of the plan. The stakeholder analysis is used to anticipate the kind of influence, positive or negative, that stakeholders might have on a plan. The impact on each stakeholder's interest in the project is evaluated, as well as the level of impact and strategies for obtaining their support or reducing obstacles for their resistance.

It is nearly impossible to anticipate every individual or group who may have an interest in the plan. Each community is unique and groups, service clubs, or organizations in one community who have little interest in a similar plan, might be deal breakers in another community. It is imperative to be familiar with the community for whom the plan is being

implemented. When developing a list of people who may be a stakeholders, be as inclusive and flexible as possible.

A broad and general idea of their point of view is adequate in the development of the plan. The stakeholders will be very forthcoming with their ideas, interests, and expectations once you meet with them. Additionally, the amount of input and contributions desired from each stakeholder should be qualified during the initial meeting. Depending on the personalities involved and how impassioned a person or group may feel about the plan, they may attempt to sidetrack or even take over the plan. Stakeholders in a project can be partners, contributors, disinterested, or adversaries. Part of the initial meeting with the identified stakeholders should be spent establishing each party's role in the project. Not only must stakeholders be identified and their input received, but they must also be supported in their views.

It is recommended that small urban police agencies pursue emotional intelligence testing. Emotional intelligence testing will aid in the selection of the best possible applicants. The testing should be completed prior to the police officer applicant beginning his academy training.

Small urban police agencies will need to secure the services of competent professionals to administer the testing. Emotional intelligence testing and training is only as good as the individual presenting the material. The selection of the presenter to test police officer applicants must be done with great care. The presenter of emotional intelligence training can set the tone for the police officer's career.

ENDNOTES

¹ John R. Grahm, MMPI-2: Assessing Personality and Psychopathology, New York, NY, 1990, p.8.

² C. Cherniss, & D. Goleman, The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, p.235 (2001).

³ Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence. Bantam Books New York, New York: p.ix. (1995).

⁴ Tom Esensten, Organizational Effectiveness Consulting, Command College lecture, October 7, 2002.

⁵ Franklin Covey, Original Compact Organizer, November 18, 2002.

⁶ Becky Ung, Author, interview by author via the telephone, San Marino, Ca, October 22, 2002.

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