

The Human Touch
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Graduating at the top of your class and clawing your way past the competition isn't always the route to success. Emotional intelligence – how well they deal with other people's feelings – is vital to professional as well as personal success, as four well-known Haligonians demonstrate.

Nova Scotia's Lieutenant Governor, Myra Freeman; Pete Lockett, president of Pete's Frootique, Ruth Goldbloom, chair of the Pier 21 Foundation; and Fred MacGillvray, president and CEO of the Trade Centre Ltd agreed to have their emotional intelligence measured, providing that individual scores remained private. They each completed the BarOn Emotional Quotient (EQ) inventory, a validated psychological assessment of emotional and social functioning (see "Know yourself" at end of article for details of measures.) The 1133 item online test takes approximately 20 minutes to complete.

An EQ of 100 is considered good; it means the person is functioning at a socially and emotionally acceptable level. Most people score between 85 and 115, the top possible score is 150. Each of the four scored above 120 in emotional self awareness; the ability to understand their own feelings, differentiate between them, and know what caused them and why. Collectively the group scored in the top 25%.

It should be no surprise that Freeman, Goldbloom, Lockett and MacGillvray love what they do. That's known in psychological terms as self-actualization, which falls into the intrapersonal skills category.

People with high intrapersonal scores tend to know themselves well and feel good about themselves and what they're doing. It should go without saying that anyone who hates what they're doing isn't likely to be successful.

All four leaders know that to be successful, they must communicate well and be able to understand others. Relating well to others, having good social skills, and understanding and interacting well with others is a combination of empathy and interpersonal relationship skills.

Each of the 15 areas is like an ingredient; often it's a combination of ingredients that creates exceptional skills. Given the combination of emotional skills possessed by these four leaders, when they stand up to speak, people listen. Their confidence shows in the way they present themselves. Scores can, however, combine for less than positive results. People with overly developed empathy, low self-regards, and low assertiveness, for instance, can become doormats.

While many factors contribute to success, emotional intelligence is increasingly being accepted as a vital component, As Ruth Goldbloom, Fred MacGillvray, Myra Freeman, and Pete Lockett demonstrate every .day of their lives. The good news is that, unlike IQ, EQ scores can be improved. One of the first steps is understanding more about the emotional and social skills of people who are successful and applying those lessons to your own life.

RUTH GOLDBLOOM: Gathering Stories

Ruth Goldbloom, the chair of Halifax's Pier 21 Foundation, is an ideal example of someone who knows how she feels and is able to express that with confidence (a combination of emotional self-awareness and high empathy). "If I don't feel it, I don't do it," she says. Goldbloom is the force behind the Pier 21 National Historic Site, for which she was awarded the Order of Canada in 1992. Pier 21 captured the Attractions Canada award for the No. 1 tourist site in Canada in 2001 and 2002.

Years before she took over Pier 21, Goldbloom was asked to chair the United Way of Halifax Region. She wasn't sure what she could contribute as chair, since she wasn't part of a corporate network. Since she had always worked in the non-profit sector, she didn't have a corporate network to draw on. She remembers thinking that she wouldn't be able to motivate volunteers and couldn't effectively promote the United Way unless she had firsthand knowledge of what she was representing. In two and a half weeks, Goldbloom visited all 52 agencies in metro Halifax served by the United Way, something that had never been done before.

By visiting each agency, Goldbloom gathered stories that touched and moved her. She used these stores when talking to others. She could say to corporate people "Come with me for one hour and let me take you to the Wee Care, and then let me take you to the hot lunch school program that they have for kids in the north end. For most it is their only meal of the day. Then tell me what you can give to the Unite Way"

Raising funds for Pier 21, Goldbloom often meets with top corporate executives across the country and has no difficulty relating to them. She attributes her ability to talk to people t all levels to being born in New Waterford, N.S., a small mining community in Cape Breton where there was not status or hierarchy. It wasn't important who the person was; you dealt with a miner the same way you dealt with the mayor. Those small-town roots, where everyone helped each other, instilled in her the need to give back and help others – in other words, a sense of social responsibility.

FRED MACGILLVRAY: Instilling desire

“At the end of the day, none of us should care who cuts the ribbon.” So says Fred MacGillvray, the president and CEO of Trade Centre Ltd, a Crown corporation that operates Halifax’s Metro Centre and World Trade and Convention Centre. MacGillvray believes that his success is being part of a team that shares a commitment and vision and has the ability to achieve it. His interpersonal relationship skills are strong, which helps when it comes to forming strong ties with many different kinds of people.

“The greatest ability of and CEO or leader is the ability to bring people together to achieve success,” says MacGillvray. “It’s managing the process through people. An individual who feels they are ever going to achieve it be themselves, well, they probably never will.” MacGillvray was the driving force behind bringing the Junior World Hockey Championships to Halifax; the most well attended and viewed junior championships in the world to date. He recognizes the unique value that everybody brings to the table and he leads by doing. For example, when he walks through the building, he’s likely to pick up garbage and throw it in the wastebasket; he sees every job as important.

MacGillvray had high scores overall but scored especially high in assertiveness. When he wants to accomplish something he doesn’t let anything stand in his way. Since he combines assertiveness with high empathy and interpersonal skills, he’s able to convince others rather than steamroll them.

MacGillvray’s greatest emotional strength is an ability to put people at ease and being able to instil a desire to be part of his team. One employee says that MacGillvray can let you know when you’ve made a mistake, but you still walk out feeling better than when you walked in. MacGillvray acts as a mentor. Emphasizing that learning comes from taking risks and occasionally making mistakes. He delights in sharing his knowledge and expertise, knowing that when other people in the company and community achieve success, it comes full circle. He’s also able to acknowledge when someone has a great idea and he recognizes that not everybody thinks or feels the same way. He knows that every person offers something that is unique and that knowledge and uniqueness will benefit the team.

MYRA FREEMAN: Opening Doors

The position of the lieutenant governor has seen a lot of first since Myra Freeman took office. Freeman is Nova Scotia’s first female lieutenant governor and also the first Jewish person and the first teacher in the post. Her warmth, charm and grace are well known and extend to people throughout Nova Scotia. More than any other lieutenant governor, Freeman has travelled to the small out of the way fishing villages that in the past weren’t deemed large or important enough for the

Queen's representative. For instance school administration once delivered medals for achievement to the top student in each school with no personal acknowledgement. Since taking office, Freeman has instilled an awards ceremony in which every student who receives the award has the opportunity to be handed it in person by the lieutenant governor.

Freeman says she has her mother, who passed away 10 years ago to thank for her social skills and empathy. The lieutenant governor scored high in all areas but especially high in emotional self-awareness, empathy and social responsibility. "(My mother) always opened her door to people passing by," she says. "She had a deep feeling for others and seemed to be able to identify with any emotion they were feeling. I remember her always doing good deeds to make them feel better, and I think I just watched her and I started to perhaps model after her. I see my daughter doing the same things."

Freeman watches people and picks up physical cues about how they're feeling. She applies compassion to her high skills in empathy and relieves discomfort when she can, which is a mark of strong social-responsibility skills. She can see the difference he office has made in the communities she has supported, "whether the constituents are artists or whatever the organization is. I have tried to establish that recognitions are made. In the regard I will walk away from this job feeling I have done my all and given my best."

PETE LUCKETT: Spinning Plates

Before Pete Lockett, the president of Bedford based Pete's Frootique and one of Canada's leading independent retailers, became a media personality, rumour had it that tour buses would reroute so people could stop by his fresh vegetable market in Saint John, N.B., to talk to him. "If you are out there with passion and you love what you're doing, it's recognized by people," says Lockett. His career as a speaker and media personality developed because of his notoriety and people skills.

Being so socially adept can lead to stressful situation, but Lockett possesses good stress management skills as well as adaptability. On days when he wants to accomplish a lot, for instance, he knows he has to stay off the floor of his store; otherwise people constantly approach him, and it's not in his nature to be aloof. With his schedule of running Pete's Frootique, public speaking, taping television shows, and writing books, "I feel like the guy in the circus spinning the plates," he says. "Sometimes the priorities change. Sometimes one area of my life requires a great big spin, and the other days I may just be able to give it a little flick."

Lockett can handle stress well because he does what needs to be done in the moment. "The produce industry really makes you prioritize your life," he says.

“You start adapting those strategies for everything because out on the produce floor there are over 260 items that are deteriorating by the second. Every day it’s a different set of priorities. To be a great produce operator, you’ve got to be able to juggle the plates and constantly have great peripheral vision and go from one thing to another. ▣

Know Yourself

The BarOn EQ Inventory breaks emotional intelligence into five scales, each with sub-categories of skills. Those are:

INTRAPERSONAL

- Emotional self-awareness: knowing how you feel
- Assertiveness: expressing feelings, beliefs and thoughts with confidence but not aggressively
- Self-regard: having proper regard for yourself
- Self-actualization: realizing your full potential
- Independence: not controlled by, or emotionally dependent on others

INTERPERSONAL

- Empathy: understanding and appreciating how others feel
- Interpersonal relationships: having positive, caring, respectful relationships
- Social responsibility; taking good care of your community

ADAPTABILITY

- Problem solving: knowing what the problem is, and coming up with and testing solutions
- Reality testing: being able to objectively evaluate the external world and knowing the difference between it and the internal world
- Flexibility: able to bend without breaking

STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Stress tolerance: able to handle pressure well
- Impulse control: resisting an impulse to act

GENERAL MOOD

- Happiness: feeling contented and satisfied
- Optimism: looking on the bright side even when that’s difficult