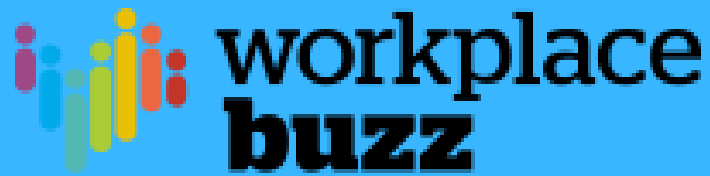

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SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE: READING THE ROOM

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What is it?

Social Intelligence is the skill of understanding what others are thinking and feeling and managing our own conversation and behaviour to most effectively connect. It is not an automatic ability but is developed over time from our experiences with other and learning for our social successes and failures.

Good social intelligence helps us build better relationships and successfully navigate social environments, being able to interact with a wide range of people and in vastly different contexts. It also allows us to develop an image of ourselves that we want to project, with authenticity, but tailored to those in front of us at a given time.

How to do it?

Social Intelligence is culmination of skills that can be developed through practice in any social setting. Below is an overview of some of the top skills involved to reflect on and grow.

Conversational Fluency: Having the conversational skills that allow interactions with a wide variety of people. It is the ability of excellent networkers that 'work the room' with ease, striking up interesting exchanges at the drop of a hat.

Acknowledging Social Rules: All of society is governed by subtle social rules, scripts or 'norms'. Navigate these through different situations and play the social roles required in the right stage or setting that makes everyone involved feel comfortable and at ease.

Effective Listening: Being able to establish a real connection with the person you are talking to, by listening well and building rapport. See active listening for some tips on building this skill.

Understanding Others: Working out what makes people tick and being able to attune yourself to how other are feeling in the moment. This is an example of 'reading the room', in picking up the subtleties that let you know how to act and interact with people and their needs.

Role Playing: Playing the right social role for the moment isn't just for the ease of others, it builds a feeling of self-efficacy and a comfort and confidence in social setting with all types of people.

Impression Management: This is the knack of balancing showing your 'authentic self' with sensible management of your image or reputation. Portray the right elements of yourself (and to the right degree) appropriate to your context and audience.

Benefits

Better understanding of colleagues and clients and building stronger relationships through making them feel at ease, being present and involved with the situation. This is a great for helping everyone work towards the same goal and feel a part of the same team.

As a leader, this helps you to intuit what situations your employees are in, builds trust and reassurance that they can come to you and that you will act accordingly. Reading the room in meetings and navigating what is or isn't being said, helping each member feel at ease are all essential for getting through difficult circumstances

.It can even have benefits far closer to home, in strengthening our sense of belonging and friendship, countering the physical and mental detriments of loneliness and stress.