



Getting in Touch with Your Feelings is Crucial – Whether You’re The Next James Bond or Inventing Cars of the Future

- Highly trained engineers are often stereotyped as lacking social skills
- First-of-its kind study shows such skills account for almost a third of employee effectiveness
- Now Ford is rolling out applied emotional intelligence training in Europe
- Intelligence services also now emphasise need for emotional intelligence – and high IQ

COLOGNE, Germany, March 27, 2017 – In the movies, James Bond solves problems with his fists and the help of super-smart Q – whose futuristic and deadly gadgets help do the talking. Being a good listener is not part of the package.

But just as Bond’s real-life counterparts are now required to show a full set of social skills, so that is the case with Q’s automotive counterparts, the engineers who are working on the cars of the future. *

Ford will be rolling out emotional intelligence training for its employees in Europe, through a course with RWTH Aachen University, the company’s research partner in Germany.

“Traditionally, engineers have been seen as individual contributors and there remains a major focus on technical skills, knowledge and imagination,” said Prof. Richard Boyatzis of Case Western Reserve University in Ohio. “But contrary to common perception, engineers do not work alone. They work in multidisciplinary teams with diverse clients. The ability to work with others is an important consideration.”

According to a new first-of-its-kind study, listening to, understanding, and inspiring colleagues can account for as much as 31 per cent of their effectiveness. This was a key finding of research undertaken with Ford engineers – and their colleagues and reports – who were asked whether they love their workplace, and how they cooperate and discuss ideas for the future. The study also found it was possible to predict how enthusiastic engineers would be about projects, just by knowing how those projects were communicated.

“Emotional intelligence is about being able to identify emotions, in yourself and others, and to know how to handle and manage them,” said Rocio Luna, team coach and mediator, Training and Consulting e. V., Ford of Europe. “We’re looking to train our engineers to be better at recognising their own feelings and at reading those of others – so they can best handle when an angry person might cause problems, a happy person is keen to collaborate, and a stressed person wants to talk.”

In an age where the importance of artificial intelligence and robots is increasing, people are expected to focus on skills and capabilities that artificial intelligence has trouble replicating – understanding, motivating, and interacting with human beings. **

Ford has a network of ten engineering and research centres around the world – including Merkenich in Germany, Dunton in England and Golcuk in Turkey – which harness the talents of 25,000 engineers. The company recently opened the Merkenich Innovation Hub that offers employees on-demand dedicated workshops; training and ideation sessions; anonymous access to research and tailored, in-depth information; as well as patent consultation.

“In many engineering schools and programs, emotional and social intelligence is given cursory attention, like tolerating your crazy uncle at a wedding after he has had too much to drink. But companies are facing a motivational crisis; with three out of four employees not feeling engaged at work. Our research shows just how much emotions matter,” Prof. Boyatzis added.

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Editor’s note

The Role of Emotional and Social Intelligence Competencies in Engineer’s Effectiveness and Engagement was published in Career Development International on February 24, 2017

* <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/02/mi6-tells-minorities-we-need-you-why-are-you-not-thinking-about-us>

** <https://hbr.org/2017/02/the-rise-of-ai-makes-emotional-intelligence-more-important>

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