
EQ and CEO's: People Aren't Carburetors

By Lac D. Su, M.S.

In 1977, Bob Limber started his career in a Detroit car manufacturing company putting carburetors into cars. It was a technical task and he was very good at it. Bob was recognized and rewarded for his unnerving work ethics, versatile hands, and the intelligence to get it the first time. His boss wanted other mechanics to match his performance and dedication.

Putting parts together was purely manual labor and didn't require much interaction with others. Bob was very comfortable coming in each morning, worked for ten hours, took enough time to eat lunch, and then went home. He comes in and gets the job done. By doing this day in and day out, Bob eventually moved up the ranks.

He became a CEO for the same company. He doesn't touch car parts anymore and is no longer putting parts together. He has a new responsibility—

putting people together to drive performance. Bob is not used to this.

Bob thought he would tackle his new job like he did his old, by working hard, keeping to himself, and expecting people to know what is required of them. Employees are afraid to approach Bob because he comes across as very stiff and rigid. People are scared to ask him questions because they feel he does not appreciate any mundane inquiries. No one dared give Bob feedback because "no one gives the boss feedback".

Bob knew what he wanted from his employees, but had a hard time expressing it to them. His mechanical days trained him to mind his P's and Q's, get the job done, and limit chitchats. He never had a real chance or the inclination to interact with people.

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Bob had the technical skill and the brains to process information. Though these two competencies got him to the executive level, he lacked the one flair that was crucial for his new leadership role—emotional intelligence.

Research data compiled, using the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal™, in the Technical Manual (2003), revealed some interesting results. Employees in various job titles, in different organizations and countries, were asked to evaluate their emotional intelligence levels. Individual contributors, supervisors, managers, directors, vice-presidents, senior executives, and CEO's all participated. EQ scores were lower for those in senior-level positions and lowest for Chief Executive Officers.

Why So Rigid?

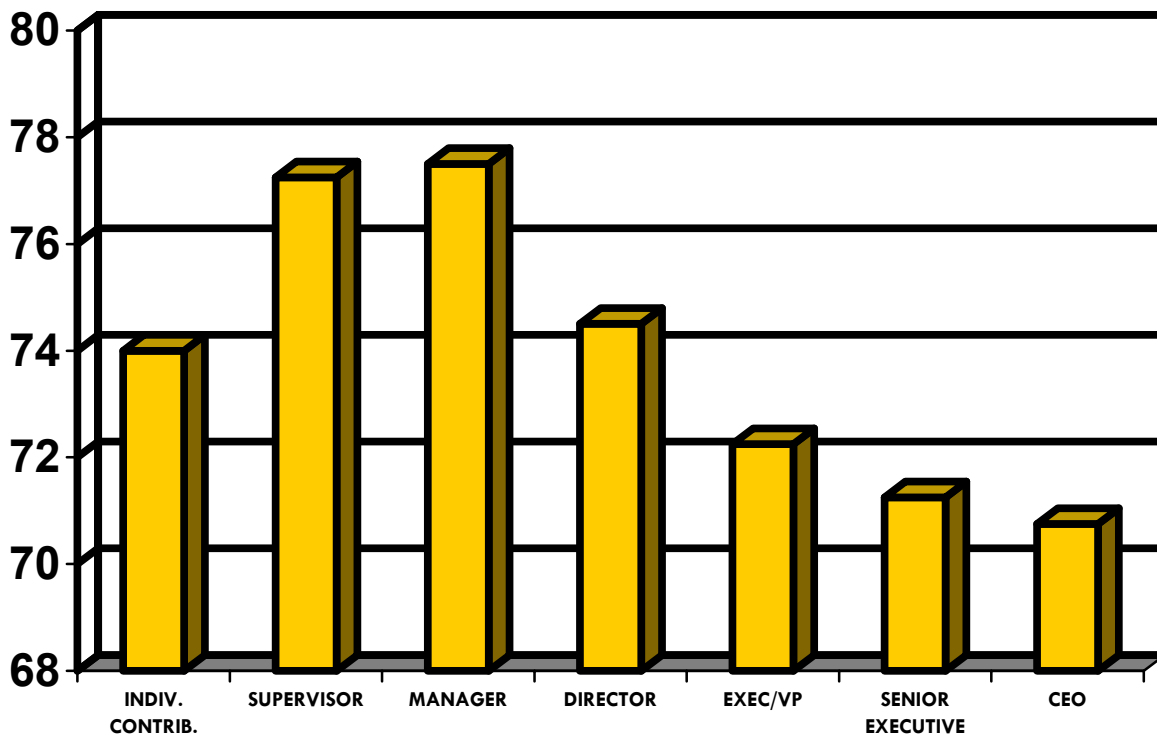
CEO's in big corporations often get to their positions because they are smart, driven, and think outside the box.

Some are non-consensus builders, and don't care much about what others think of them. Their primary focus is to take their company to the top. This sometimes means being direct, blunt, and ruthless to people, and ignoring how these actions can affect them. This narrow view will hurt more than help reach the goal. Times have changed. Executives can't afford to sabotage success by ignoring the "softer" side of doing business. In today's economy, the human "emotional" capital and potential are worth retaining.

Lonely At The Top

Like Bob Limber, many CEO's find themselves very secluded at the top. Intelligence, technical skills, and strong work ethics most likely got them there because they were recognized, rewarded, and promoted for these qualities. Soft skills like emotional intelligence, empathy, and commitment are expected but not rewarded or promoted much. Many CEO's lack the

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***The *Emotional Intelligence Quickbook* (Bradberry and Greaves, 2003) summarizes research conducted on the normative database for the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal™ revealing EQ scores dropped sharply for individuals holding titles of Director and above.**

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ability to manage emotions and relationships effectively at this level. They are perceived as emotionally void monsters, and people are afraid to be around them. This impacts performance because a CEO's job is to get things done through other people.

You Talking To Me?

People were reluctant to question Bob's actions or to give him feedback. Furthermore, his demeanor reinforces this fear. Bob is not aware that his silent treatment reaffirms people's perceptions of him. He probably doesn't even know why people feel this way.

Emotional intelligence allows executives like Bob to be in tune to these cues. Knowing how he comes across to people starts at the self-awareness level. Learning to channel his emotions in productive ways is the self-management level. Recognizing how each unique exchange of information affects people taps into the social awareness level. Willingness to work on all these skills to

build a bond with your employees ties it all together in relationship management.

Sounds simple. But executives like Bob never paid much attention to this important skill before. Lucky for Bob, emotional intelligence is something he can learn and develop with self-evaluation, feedback, and practice. The real question is: Is he open to learning such a skill? Without it, he's unable to bring his people together as easy as he did his carburetors.