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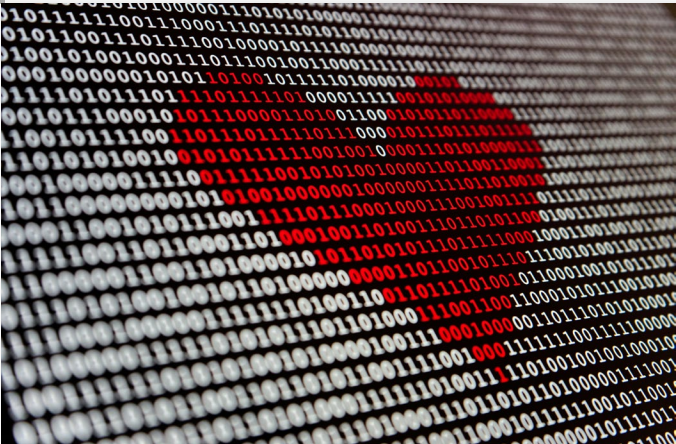
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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE FOR ACCELERATING WORKPLACE PERFORMANCE

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With the growing mental health burden where 1 person in 5 suffers mental illness, 1 person dies of suicide every 40 seconds, and the high cost (direct/indirect) of managing the mental health risk, today's workplace dynamics have inevitably changed calling for building an environment and people skills that mitigate behaviors predisposing to mental ill-health. The biggest challenge in this era will be sustaining a vibrant workforce and making meaningful contributions despite the normal stresses of life. The key accelerator to mental health is a work skills-set

that can identify, sensitively appreciate, and appropriately respond to emotional challenges among team members. Among other skills is Emotional Intelligence (EQ). EQ is the ability to manage both your own emotions and understand the emotions of people around you. It is composed of five (5) elements, being self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. While an academic career focuses on a high intelligence quotient (IQ), there is a need to upscale skilling and learning to acquire Emotional Intelligence (EQ) for a cohesive work environment that drives workplace empathy, and team energy to foster performance. A strong, mentally stable, and collaborative workforce will need to build EQ capacity to buffer effects, symptoms, and breakdown progression (low-performance turnover).

With the growing occupational mental health risk, every workplace needs capacity building to create mental resilience to predisposing factors in an effort to survive mental health episodes of psychotic outbreaks and relapses of existing conditions that foster toxic work environments. EQ skilling and application play a very important role in neutralizing the environment. While mental health is very personal, it is susceptible to socioeconomic, technological, spiritual, and workplace dynamics of the external environment.

In a world of growing negative news, population diversity, globalization, high technological uptake, distortion of natural social-eco systems, and so on, the mental process of every individual is inclined to more negative reflection, imagination, and action. Needless to say, people's work attributes are



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a direct response to perceptions of the environment. Our thoughts, often influenced by external factors, shape our emotions, and direct our behavior, actions, decisions, and work motivation.

EQ Responds to Mental Health in a workplace by way of demonstrating one's ability to manage personal emotions instead of submitting to psychotic outbursts that may be toxic and infective to teams. It builds the maturity to understand oneself and how we affect others, it empowers us to resolve conflict effectively and quickly before people get drained to switch off. EQ is a language that introduces us to better communication techniques that draw attention (listening) to others while coaching us to stay calm in times of stress, conflict, and challenges. An emotionally intelligent person will exercise taking charge of their personal thoughts, emotions, and actions by reading the environment and knowing how to respond without causing conflict, confusion, or indifference (staying connected). Emotional intellects have the confidence to fail but not fall.

Every individual has the potential to win and raise however many drawbacks in the realm of failure because they took an emotional judgement over their lives at some point. Every decision or action made of uncensored thoughts will eventually affect our work environment and career progression. Think about what you are thinking before acting.

Emotional intelligence refers to your skill at identifying and effectively responding to what you, and the people around you, are thinking and feeling—which is especially important in professional settings. (Author Mark Craemer, Emotional Intelligence in a Workplace).

Improving EQ firstly requires understanding your potential/emotional needs, deliberately feeding your mind with positive energy by giving yourself a positive mindset, and the abundance of give the same to others. You can never give what you do not have from the inside out. At the corporate leadership level build a value system that compliments and motivates a positive mindset in teams starting from leadership.

Accelerating workplace wellness and performance in this era will require a deliberate effort to invest in a mental health skillset to address and mitigate the incumbent risk as a way of beating the odds of potential performance stagnation and human capital loss.

Minet Uganda Insurance Brokers Limited has set the pace as the "Employee Wellness Thought Leader", providing a holistic relevant, and timely mental health program designed to mitigate the growing mental health risks/needs in the corporate space and academic settings. We have full programs for Wellness Assessments, Preventive/Awareness Education, and Risk management.

Minet, Securing Africa's future!

Helen Mbabazi | Wellness Coordinator | Minet Uganda