

Your Personal Coach

By
Kathleen Brehony, Ph.D.

Dear Kathleen,

I work harder than anyone else in my office and yet I continue to get passed over for promotions and still haven't made manager. I know more about what we're doing than my boss. My co-workers seem to get ahead because they are well liked rather than because of what they do. I've seen this in every job I've had. I'm smarter than most of the rest of them, but no one seems to give me any respect. I'm sick of it and let them know it. Isn't it true that who you know – and who likes you – is more important than what you know?

-- Hard Worker Working with Jerks

Dear Hard Worker,

There's a lot of truth in what you're saying. The fact is that working well with others, being liked, and perceived as being easy to get along with are often more important than what you individually may contribute to realizing organizational goals. Whether this is fair or not is an open question best left to the philosophers and ethicists. But you are right that this is a dynamic that operates in almost every workplace.

I can't help but notice that the tone in your letter is quite negative, judgmental, and – if you don't mind my saying so – even a bit whiny. If you are transmitting only a small portion of this attitude toward your boss and co-workers, it's unlikely that you will ever get a promotion.

If you want to succeed, you'll need to make more of an effort to get along with your co-workers and let your boss know that you are a team player. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not talking about sucking up to the boss or being inauthentic with your colleagues, what I'm talking about is emotional intelligence (EQ).

Research by social scientists suggests that more than eighty percent of success at work and in life results from emotional intelligence rather than other kinds of intelligence – such as expertise at some specific aspect of your job function. In other words, far more than verbal or spatial intelligence, EQ matters more than IQ. Dealing effectively with people and understanding yourself is more highly predictive of success than being able to solve problems logically, write the most brilliant computer code, or sell more life insurance policies than any of your co-workers.

People who are able to project mutual trust, respect, rapport, and warmth to others are generally more effective and successful. The ability to express and control emotion, communication and social skills, optimism, empathy, initiative, and sensitivity are important qualities for leadership in every field. Ask yourself: How well do you recognize your own and others feelings and how well do you manage those feelings?

These abilities are the fundamentals of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence takes into account the issues of the heart as well as those of the head.

Study after study has confirmed that social and emotional abilities count for more than sheer IQ and that these are essential to getting ahead. The ability to build people up, to motivate them to do their best, and to bring them together is what management and leadership is all about. If you can't do that, then you are likely to languish in the hive of

Your Personal Coach

Kathleen Brehony

8/30/06

the worker bees for the rest of your career in spite of how smart or productive you might be.

Of course, it's very difficult to accurately measure something as abstract and overreaching as Emotional Intelligence but go to this website -- <http://www.utne.com/azEq2.tmpl> -- to take a short online inventory that will give you a bit of an indication of where you stand on this human quality. You might also benefit from reading *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman and *Emotional Intelligence at Work* by Hendrie Weisinger.

Hard Worker, if I were you, I'd ask myself why I am so angry and what kind of attitude I am broadcasting in my workplace. Be gentle, but totally honest, with yourself. If your superiority feelings that you are so much smarter (not that you're not intelligent), or excluded from others are old and pervasive attitudes – not just at work but in other areas of your life as well – I would seriously consider working with a therapist or counselor to heal those wounded places. You write that you've encountered these same problems at every job – that suggest to me that you are carrying these attitudes with you and your current workplace is not the real issue here.

I think you're shooting yourself in the foot with your negative attitudes toward others and your obvious anger. But you can change. You can use your intelligence to offer creative solutions to your job and you can learn to better understand the human dimension of working with your boss and co-workers. Not only will you achieve more professionally, but the truth be told, you'll also be a happier human being.

Send your personal coaching questions to kathleen@fullpotentialliving.com or call 473-4004. Kathleen is a personal and executive coach, clinical psychologist, and writer. (©2006 Kathleen Brehony. All Rights Reserved.) Columns are archived at www.fullpotentialliving.com.