TRACOM’s Behavioral EQ Model™ is based on the latest research in both brain function and performance. It focuses on the most important elements of Emotional Intelligence and those that can be successfully developed. The Model consists of four dimensions which house the fifteen various core competencies. The Behavioral EQ Explorations series takes a closer look each of these core competencies. This whitepaper focuses on Self-Insight.

Self-insight is a crucial element of TRACOM’s Behavioral EQ model. It is an indicator of people’s ability to tune into themselves and understand the internal processes that are influencing their behavior. Specifically, self-insight refers to the accuracy of one’s awareness of personal strengths and limitations. Those who are high in this competency reflect and evaluate themselves in an objective manner and are open to feedback and self-improvement. These attributes are critical for effective work performance. Research shows that leaders who have accurate self-awareness are better able to regulate their behavior and sustain motivation, and are less likely to derail at work. They are also able to understand their capabilities and capitalize on them.

Benjamin Franklin wrote, in Poor Richard’s Improved Almanack (1750), “There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one’s self.”
What Prevents Us from Having Accurate Self-Insight?

Unfortunately, we often struggle to attain an accurate picture of ourselves. Research shows that our self-perceptions are only mildly to moderately accurate. Generally, people have overinflated perceptions of their own talents, abilities, and character – they see themselves as better than they actually are. For example, of all of the engineers in one company, 42% thought they ranked in the top 5% among their peers. And, a survey of college professors showed that 94% consider their work “above average,” which is statistically impossible.

These flawed self-perceptions are partly due to the fact that people seek to see themselves in a flattering light. Therefore, they filter and frame incoming information in a way that allows them to maintain a desirable image of themselves in their mind. Other psychological mechanisms that explain our erroneous self-perceptions include the fact that people often do not have the information they need to accurately assess their performance compared to others. Or, people simply ignore relevant information that they do have on hand, such as their past experiences, background and circumstances. For example, when people try to predict how likely they are to get a project completed in a particular timeframe, they base their prediction solely on the facts that are relevant to the project – the number of tasks that need to be completed, how many people need to approve the project, and so on – and ignore other background factors such as children getting sick, other projects arising, and so on.
While Self-Insight can be practiced and realized on an individual level, one of the best ways to gain self-insight is through receiving multi-rater feedback. Understanding how others view us can draw attention to what we may be overlooking when we see ourselves. It can enlighten us and give us insight into our strengths as well as our areas for development. This is why we offer multi-rater survey feedback in our courses.

When multi-rater survey feedback is not available, there are a variety of ways to increase self-insight. Here are two simple strategies that you can put into practice right away:

1. **Ask a trusted colleague for feedback on your work performance** — Your acquaintances may assess your performance and abilities more accurately than you can. In one study, researchers found that surgical residents’ self-views did not significantly predict their performance on standardized board exams, but their supervisors’ ratings and peer ratings did. Additionally, Bass and Yamarino (1991) found that among naval officers, peer ratings of leadership were more predictive of early promotion than self-ratings of leadership. So, to get an accurate picture of your performance, ask a trusted colleague to give you feedback on your technical skills as well as your interpersonal skills. Because this performance appraisal process can be uncomfortable for people, reassure your colleague that you are seeking his or her input because you want to get a realistic perception of how others see you and you’d like to use this information to improve.

2. **Adopt a broader perspective** — Ironically, when we are immersed in our own minds, engaging in fine-grained rational analysis of our own selves and the impetus for our actions, we end up skewing our self-perceptions. The mind is too complex to understand in this manner. Instead, what many researchers propose is that we “zoom out.” That is, attain some distance and look at the general themes, the general story, of our lives. This can be done in a couple of ways. First, when we self-reflect, we can think of ourselves in the third person, as if we are someone else giving ourselves guidance. Kross & Ayduk (2008) found that when people look at themselves using this self-distance technique it leads to more adaptive self-reflection. Another technique is to create a temporal distance — that is, to think about how others would view us and our performance, not in the moment, but in several months’ time. This technique encourages us to think more abstractly, allows us to see ourselves at the same level of detail as others see us, and increases our accuracy.

Generally, our self-perceptions are flawed and only moderately related to our actual behavior and performance. Others, in fact, are more likely to see us as we actually are. There are several different approaches to enhancing self-insight, but many of them center on the notion of taking ourselves out of our own minds and attaining some distance. By asking others for their perceptions of us or by adopting a broader perspective, we can begin to evaluate ourselves more objectively, and having an objective awareness of ourselves is critical for performing effectively at work.

Self-Insight is one of the featured core competencies of TRACOM’s Behavioral EQ Model™. The Model consists of four dimensions which house the fifteen various core competencies. Our Emotional Intelligence program consists of elements which are applicable, measurable, and can be practiced to actually see improvements. TRACOM has whitepapers addressing each of the fifteen core competencies [here](#).
About TRACOM Group's Behavioral EQ Model™:
TRACOM Group’s Behavioral EQ Model is the third generation of Emotional Intelligence, focusing on skills that are most related to performance and that can be practiced and developed. This model encompasses emotional intelligence (this refers to how well we perceive and understand our own emotions and the emotions of others) and behavioral intelligence (this refers to how well we manage personal behavior and relationships). Behavioral elements of our Behavioral EQ model are the most important because these skills are visible to others and most strongly predictive of job performance and career success.

Author:
Dr. Natalie Wolfson, Organizational Research Consultant for The TRACOM Group

References:


© Behavioral EQ, Putting Emotional Intelligence to Work, The Social Intelligence Company, SOCIAL STYLE and TRACOM are registered trademarks of the TRACOM Corporation. Developing Behavioral EQ, BEQ, Behavioral EQ Model and SOCIAL STYLE Model are trademarks of The TRACOM Corporation.