

**Emotional Energy -- The first in a series discussing the 13 tendencies in our reports.**

Emotional Energy—it is the first thing you see when reading one of our hiring or coaching reports. But, what does it mean when we say someone has high emotional energy or that they have only a low level of energy? And, what does it have to do with an employee's performance in the workplace? Perhaps the easiest way to think of emotional energy is to equate it to the size of a car or truck engine.

A big semi-truck with a pick-up size engine may do all right as long as the road is straight and flat but as soon as the roadway becomes hilly and difficult, that truck would start to have problems moving along and would have to slow down--right? There just would not be enough power to keep the truck running at a desired speed.

Well, people with low emotional energy perform the same way. As long as the job is simple and not very difficult or stressful, they can do well. But, as soon as the pressure, amount of work, or degree of difficulty changes, that person begins to have trouble maintaining their optimal performance. Ultimately, the stress could cause them to burnout and they just 'shut down'.

Emotional energy is that part of physical energy used by a person to cope with stress, frustration, conflict or pressure. Everyone has a point at which they cannot function (or cope) effectively any longer but this point varies from person to person based on how much emotional energy they possess. The lower their emotional energy, the sooner they begin to have difficulty when required to work under pressure or in a stressful environment. That is why it is so important to know in what kind of environment a person is going to be required to work. Each job has a requirement for emotional energy and, the better the match between the job and the person, the more successful the person can be.

A few years ago I was working in Detroit during the winter and was given a Mustang convertible with a 5.0 engine to drive. (I think someone at that rental company had a warped sense of humor!) It snowed and was icy all that week so each time I drove that car I had to be very careful or the wheels would break loose due to the amount of power it had. This caused me to work very hard to control the car.

This is very similar to a person with high emotional energy and poorly integrated emotional tendencies. They have to work hard at controlling themselves since they are being driven by their high energy. We sometimes refer to those people as performing 'like a bull in a china shop', which simply means they lack the ability to control these strong drives and, thus, they just act without giving much thought to what they are doing.

High emotional energy tends to make people very bright and they usually look very good during the short interview period--just like the Mustang looked good sitting on the lot. But, you have to understand how that person is to be utilized just as you need to assess the environment in which you are driving. As the emotional energy rises, it becomes more important that a person's emotional tendencies support that energy. Otherwise, they will be like that Mustang on the ice—not very effective!

But, if a person has high energy and emotional tendencies that support that energy, they can perform well. Then, it is simply a matter of matching them to the right job in order for them to excel. But, this is not as simple as it may sound. The various elements of a job, such as the type of work, the activities involved in doing the work, the people around the job, etc., can positively or negatively impact a person's ability to be successful.

In order to figure out how much energy a person needs to have to succeed in a certain role, let's deconstruct a common job, such as receptionist, by asking these simple questions.

How many phone lines will they be answering?

How many walk-ins will they greet each day?

It would not take much energy to handle 4 phone lines and 10 walk-ins but what about 30 phone lines and 50 or 75 walk-ins?

Then, what if each phone line must be answered within two rings or each person must be greeted within 10 seconds of entering the office. What if this receptionist is expected to keep two conference rooms neat and orderly? And, if not busy, they are responsible for filing, sorting the mail, and billing. Does the receptionist in a small town, laid back, one attorney law firm need to possess the same level of energy as the receptionist in a large, fast paced and high pressure firm?

When we write reports on potential hires, we try to find out these kinds of things so we can identify what we believe to be the right amount of emotional energy for a given role. We need to identify the proper size 'engine', or level of emotional energy, a person must have and then match that to the difficulty of the 'road' they will travel each day in the workplace.

"Vision without action is daydreaming and action without vision is a nightmare." Anon

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