

# Trying to Manage Difficult Personalities? First, Check Your Emotional Intelligence

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Say you are working with a team on a project, and the people just don't click. Maybe there is a person who wants to have their way on everything, another who shoulders more than their share of work, and a third who will not speak up because he or she hates confrontation. It might get to where you hate going to work every day because no one is working together.

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How can you change the dynamics of your team? As the old adage goes, when you point your finger at someone else, three fingers are pointing back at you.

This is the first part of a two-part series on how you can improve life as a construction manager by being aware of your emotional intelligence quotient (EQ) and how to work on improving it. You can test your emotional intelligence, and it can be improved. It is a different model for understanding human personalities from models such as the Myers Briggs Personality Inventory which divides people into [static categories](#).

**Part I** looks at Brent Darnell's description of EQ profiles in the construction industry and other common profiles.

**Part II** will look at practical steps toward introducing these concepts to team members and carrying them through on a project.

### Part I

Darnell, an expert on emotional intelligence in the construction industry, says that "One person changing can change the whole dynamic." This is why he leads workshops for construction managers, supervisors, and foremen — the people who set the tone and tempo at the jobsite. When these leaders look at their own strengths and weaknesses in attitudes, habits, and interpersonal relationships, they can, with time and attention, become more effective and balanced on the job.

Darnell differentiates between:

- emotional intelligence quotients, which can change with awareness and effort, and
- personality types, which describe a static personality with fixed characteristics.

In other words, your EQ is something you can improve. It's dynamic, and people who are most effective at work usually have a balanced emotional intelligence profile.

So, what is an emotional intelligence profile in the first place? You can determine your profile today, by downloading and taking an EQ test [here](#).

Since the profile is dynamic and changes as you gain awareness and adjust behaviors, your EQ might be different six months from now.

Darnell worked for twenty years as a mechanical engineer before he began leadership-development training that used inventories like the Myers-Briggs. The more he learned, the more he noticed that when people got along well on a team, projects tended to be successful. He decided to develop a way to address relationships among team members.

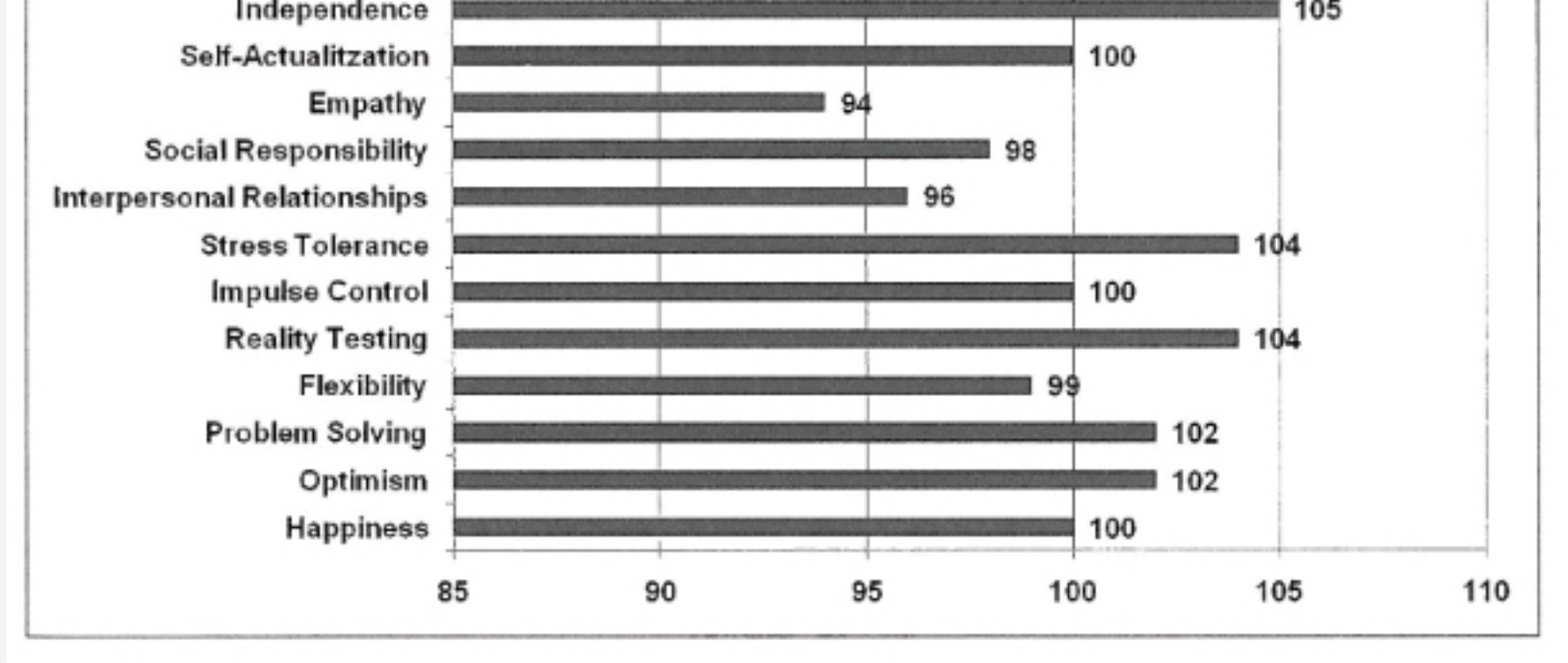
"I saw it was a missing piece, so I started my own business," he says. "If you have this element of everybody helping each other be better and reach their own goals, projects are almost always more successful."

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Since he launched his business in 2002, he has focused on introducing the concepts of EI (also commonly known as EQ) to leaders so they can change dynamics on construction projects — first by changing themselves. "If you've worked on things like empathy and your own awareness, you work with other people better. There are people who are not performing because of your attitudes. People work harder and more effectively according to whether they like you. If you make people feel valued and smart, they will like you."

And if the people who work for you like you, they are often more loyal. "A hard-driving alpha male kicks asses and when the worker gets a chance to go across the street for a dollar more, they will leave," he says.

In a white paper, "The People-Profit Connection: How Emotional Intelligence Can Maximize People Skills and Maximize Your Profits," Darnell analyzes the average scores of 500 construction managers.



The key to a healthy emotional intelligence score is balance. When Darnell analyzed these scores, he found that the score for emotional self-awareness—key for good emotional management—was low. He writes, "Low scores in the areas of emotional self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal relationships are so pervasive, we call it 'the trinity'. Many industry professionals we work with choose to develop these three competencies."

He also notes: "This group also tends to have high stress tolerance and low impulse control. This is a chaos profile based on a reactive management style, which is inherent in the industry. Most managers go from crisis to crisis."

Further, in "The People-Profit Connection," he describes the typical construction industry profile as one in which people see things in black and white. "In other words, for these people, there is a right way and wrong way to do things. In addition, the self-actualization and happiness scores for this group tend to be low. This speaks volumes about the industry today. Many believe that it just isn't as fun as it used to be."

If you take this [EI test](#) and then use this lens to observe people, you may notice that people fall into certain categories described by Dennis Ghyst, Ph.D., who wrote the EI test Darnell uses.

**The alpha profile:** In relationships, this person does not listen or ask for input from others. He or she tends to take charge or take over. If coupled with high self-regard, this may be seen as arrogant.

**The self-sacrifice profile:** This person is a great team player who likes to be helpful to others but who may take on too many responsibilities and be overwhelmed much of the time.

**The controller, puppet master, perfectionist profile:** "You may try to control too many things in relationships, which leads to conflicts. Remember, you can be right or you can be happy," Ghyst writes.

**The anger, frustration, impatience profile:** People who have angry explosions create negative experience and diminish relationship potentials. "People won't come to you for fear of an explosion," according to Ghyst.

**The burnout profile:** People with this profile have "very little time and energy for relationships and may come across as withdrawn and disinterested," he writes.

To read Brent Darnell's white papers on Emotional Intelligence, click [here](#).

Watch for Part II, which will discuss how to introduce your project teams to emotional intelligence awareness.

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